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The Man and His Work

A. E. Taylor

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A. E. TAYLOR

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TO

ALL TRUE LOVERS OF PLATO, QUICK AND DEAD,

AND IN PARTICULAR TO

PROFESSOR CONSTANTIN RITTER

Vagliami il lungo studio e 'l grande amore

PREFACE

I HOPE two classes of readers may find their account in this book—"Honours students" in our Universities, and readers with philosophical interests, but no great store of Greek scholarship. What both classes most need in a work about Plato is to be told just what Plato has to say about the problems of thought and life, and how he says it. What neither needs is to be told what some contemporary thinks Plato should have said. The sense of the greatest thinker of the ancient world ought not to be trimmed to suit the tastes of a modern neo-Kantian, neo-Hegelian, or neo-realist. Again, to understand Plato's thought we must see it in the right historical perspective. The standing background of the picture must be the social, political, and economic life of the age of Socrates, or, for the *Laws*, of the age of Plato. These considerations have determined the form of the present volume. It offers an analysis of the dialogues, not a systematization of their contents under a set of subject-headings. Plato himself hated nothing more than system-making. If he had a system, he has refused to tell us what it was, and if we attempt to force a system on a mind which was always growing, we are sure to end by misrepresentation. This is why I have tried to tell the reader just what Plato says, and made no attempt to force a "system" on the Platonic text. My own comments are intended to supply exegesis, based as closely as may be on Plato's own words, not to applaud nor to denounce. The result, I hope, is a picture which may claim the merit of historical fidelity. For the same reason I have been unusually careful to determine the date and historical setting assumed for each dialogue. We cannot really understand the *Republic* or the *Gorgias* if we forget that the Athens of these conversations is meant to be the Athens of Nicias or Cleon, not the very different Athens of Plato's own manhood, or if we find polemic against Isocrates, in talk supposed to have passed at a time when Isocrates was a mere boy. If it were not that the remark might sound immodest, I would say that the model I have had before me is Grote's great work on the *Companions of Socrates*. Enjoying

neither Grote's superb scholarship nor his freedom from limitations of space, I have perhaps the compensation of freedom from the prejudices of a party. Whatever bias I may have in metaphysics or in politics, I have tried to keep it out of my treatment of Plato.

I must apologize for some unavoidable omissions. I have been unable to include a chapter on the Academy in the generation after Plato and Aristotle's criticisms of it; I have had to exclude from consideration the minor *dubia* and the *spuria* of the Platonic *corpus*; I have passed very lightly over much of the biology of the *Timaeus*. These omissions have been forced on me by the necessity of saying what I have to say in one volume of moderate compass. For the same reason I have had to make my concluding chapter little more than a series of hints. This omission will, I trust, be remedied by the publication of a study, "Forms and Numbers," which will, in part, appear in *Mind* simultaneously with the issue of this volume. The details of the *Timaeus* are fully dealt with in a Commentary now in course of printing at the Clarendon Press. A brief account—better than none—of the transmission of the Platonic tradition will be found in my little book, *Platonism and its Influence* (1924; Marshall Jones Co., Boston, U.S.A.; British Agents, Harrap & Son).

Want of space has sometimes forced me to state a conclusion without a review of the evidence, but I hope I have usually indicated the quarters where the evidence may be sought. May I say, once for all, that this book is no " compilation " ? I have tried to form a judgment on all questions, great and small, for myself, and mention of any work, ancient or modern, means, with the rarest of exceptions, that I have studied it from one end to the other.

There remains the grateful duty of acknowledging obligations. I am a debtor to many besides those whom I actually quote, and I hope I have not learned least from many whose views I feel bound to reject. In some cases I have echoed a well-known phrase or accepted a well-established result without express and formal acknowledgment. It must be understood that such things are mere consequences of the impossibility of excessive multiplication of footnotes, and that I here, once for all, request any one from whom I may have made such a loan to accept my thanks. The recommendations at the ends of chapters are not meant to be exhaustive nor necessarily to imply agreement with all that is said in the work or chapter recommended. The last thing I should wish is that my readers should see Plato through my spectacles. I wish here to make general mention of obligation to a host of scholars of our own time, such as Professors Apelt, Parmentier, Robin, Dr.

Adolfo Levi, the late Dr. James Adam, and others, besides those whose names recur more frequently in my pages. The immense debt of my own generation to scholars of an earlier date, such as Grote, Zeller, Diels, Baeumker, Bonitz, is too obvious to need more than this simple reference.

To two living scholars I must make very special acknowledgment. How much I owe to the published writings of my friend and colleague in Scotland, Professor Burnet, will be apparent on almost every page of my book ; I owe even more to suggestions of every kind received during a personal intercourse of many years. I owe no less to Professor C. Ritter of Tübingen, who has given us, as part of the work of a life devoted to Platonic researches, the best existing commentary on the *Laws* and the finest existing full-length study of Plato and his philosophy as a whole. One cannot despair of one's kind when one remembers that such a work was brought to completion in the darkest years Europe has known since 1648. It is a great honour to me that Dr. Ritter has allowed me to associate his name with this poor volume. Finally, I thank the publishers for their kindness in allowing the book to run to such a length.

A. E. TAYLOR

EDINBURGH, *July* 1926

NOTE TO SECOND EDITION

THIS Second Edition only differs from the first by the correction of misprints, the addition of one or two references and the modification of a few words in two or three of the footnotes.

A. E. TAYLOR

EDINBURGH, *March* 1927

NOTE TO THIRD EDITION

APART from minor corrections and some additions to the references appended to various chapters, this edition only differs from its precursors by the presence of a Chronological Table of Dates and an *Appendix*, dealing briefly with the *dubia* and *spuria* of the Platonic tradition. (I have, for convenience' sake, included in this a short account of a number of Platonic epistles which I myself believe to be neither dubious nor spurious, but have not had occasion to cite in the body of the book.) I should explain that this essay was substantially written in 1926, though it has been revised since.

I take this opportunity of mentioning the following recent works, to which I should have been glad to give more specific references in the text, had they come into my hands a little sooner. All will be found valuable by the serious student of Plato.

STENZEL, J.—*Platon der Erzieher.* (Leipzig, 1928.)
SOLMSEN, F.—*Der Entwicklung der Aristotelischen Logik und Rhetorik.* (Berlin, 1929.)
WALZER, R.—*Magna Moralia und Aristotelische Ethik.* (Berlin, 1929.)
TOEPLITZ, O.—*Das Verhältnis von Mathematik und Ideenlehre bei Plato,* in *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik I.* 1. (Berlin, 1929.)
ROBIN, L.—*Greek Thought and the Origins of the Scientific Spirit.* (E. Tr. from the revised edition of the author's *La Pensée Grecque,* London, 1928.)

A. E. TAYLOR.

EDINBURGH, *July,* 1929

NOTE TO FOURTH EDITION

I HAVE made few changes in this new edition of the text, though I have been led to rewrite one or two paragraphs in the chapter on the *Timaeus* by study of Professor Cornford's valuable commentary on his translation of the dialogue. I have tried to remove misprints and detected errors throughout. Among works important for the student of Plato published since the earlier editions of this book I could mention in particular the following:

FRUTIGER, P.—*Les Mythes de Platon.* (Paris, 1930.)
SHOREY, P.—*What Plato Said.* (Chicago, 1933.)
NOVOTNÝ, F.—*Platonis Epistulae.* (Brno, 1930.)
HARWARD, J.—*The Platonic Epistles.* (E. Tr. Cambridge, 1932.)
FIELD, G. C.—*Plato and His Contemporaries.* (London, 1930.)
CORNFORD, F. M.—*Plato's Cosmology, the Timaeus of Plato translated with a running commentary.* (London, 1937.)
SCHULL, P. M.—*Essai sur la Formation de la Pensée Grecque.* (Paris, 1934.)

A. E. TAYLOR.

CONTENTS

THE following abbreviations have occasionally been used:

E.G.Ph.[3] = BURNET, *Early Greek Philosophy* (3rd edition), 1920.

E.R.E. = HASTINGS, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1908–1921.

R.P. = RITTER AND PRELLER, *Historia Philosophiae Graecae* (9th edition), 1913.

PLATO

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF PLATO[1]

PLATO, son of Ariston and Perictione, was born in the month Thargelion (May–June) of the first year of the eighty-eighth Olympiad by the reckoning of the scholars of Alexandria, 428–7 B.C. of our own era, and died at the age of eighty or eighty-one in Ol. 108.1 (348–7 B.C.). These dates rest apparently on the authority of the great Alexandrian chronologist Eratosthenes and may be accepted as certain. Plato's birth thus falls in the fourth year of the Archidamian war, in the year following the death of Pericles, and his death only ten years before the battle of Chaeronea, which finally secured to Philip of Macedon the hegemony of the Hellenic world. His family was, on both sides, one of the most distinguished in the Athens of the Periclean age. On the father's side the pedigree was traditionally believed to go back to the old kings of Athens, and through them to the god Posidon. On the mother's side the descent is equally illustrious and more his-

[1] The chief extant lives are: (*a*) Apuleius, *de Platone*, i. 1–4; (*b*) Diogenes Laertius, iii. 1 (critical edition, Basle, 1907); (*c*) Olympiodorus (*Platonis Opera*, ed. Hermann, vi. 190–195). The least bad of these is (*b*), which appears to have been originally composed for a lady amateur of Platonic philosophy (*φιλοπλάτωνι δέ σοι δικαίως ὑπαρχούσῃ*, § 47), not before the latter part of the first century of our era. The one or two references to the scholar Favorinus of Arles may possibly be later marginal annotations by an owner or copier of the text. If they are original, they would bring down the date of the *Life* to the latter part of the second century A.D. In the main Diogenes Laertius appears to give the version of Plato's life accepted by the *literati* of Alexandria. But we can see from what we know of the work of Alexandrians like Sotion, Satyrus, and Hermippus, that biographies were already being ruined by the craze for romantic or piquant anecdote before the end of the third century B.C. In Plato's case there is a peculiar reason for suspicion of Alexandrian narratives. The writers were largely dependent on the assertions of Aristoxenus of Tarentum, a scholar of Aristotle who had known the latest generation of the fourth century Pythagoreans. Aristoxenus has long been recognized as a singularly mendacious person, and he had motives for misrepresenting both Socrates and Plato. See Burnet, *Greek Philosophy, Part I.*, p. 153.

torically certain, and is incidentally recorded for us by Plato himself in the *Timaeus*. Perictione was sister of Charmides and cousin of Critias, both prominent figures in the brief "oligarchic" anarchy which followed on the collapse of Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian war (404–3 B.C.). The grandfather of this Critias, Plato's maternal great-grandfather, was another Critias, introduced in the *Timaeus*, whose own great-grandfather Dropides was a "friend and kinsman" of Solon, the great Attic legislator. The father of this Dropides, also called Dropides, the first member of the house who figures in authentic history, was the archon of the year 644 B.C. Besides Plato himself, Ariston and Perictione had at least three other children. These were two older sons, Adimantus and Glaucon, who appear as young men in Plato's *Republic*, and a daughter Potone. Ariston appears to have died in Plato's childhood; his widow then married her uncle Pyrilampes, whom we know from the allusions of the comic poets to have been a personal intimate of Pericles as well as a prominent supporter of his policy. Pyrilampes was already by a former marriage the father of the handsome Demus, the great "beauty" of the time of the Archidamian war; by Perictione he had a younger son Antiphon who appears in Plato's *Parmenides*, where we learn that he had given up philosophy for horses.[1]

These facts are of considerable importance for the student of Plato's subsequent career. Nothing is more characteristic of him than his lifelong conviction that it is the imperative duty of the philosopher, whose highest personal happiness would be found in the life of serene contemplation of truth, to make the supreme sacrifice of devoting the best of his manhood to the service of his fellows as a statesman and legislator, if the opportunity offers. Plato was not content to preach this doctrine in the *Republic*; he practised it, as we shall see, in his own life. The emphasis he lays on it is largely explained when we remember that from the first he grew up in a family with traditions of Solon and accustomed through several generations to play a prominent part in the public life of the State. Something of Plato's remarkable insight into the realities of political life must, no doubt, be set down to early upbringing in a household of "public men." So, too, it is important to remember, though it is too often forgotten, that the most receptive years of Plato's early life must have been spent in the household of his stepfather, a prominent figure of the Periclean *régime*. Plato has often been accused of a bias against "democracy." If he had such a bias, it is not to be accounted for by the influence of early surroundings. He must have been originally indoctrinated with "Periclean" politics; his dislike of them in later life, so far as it

[1] See the family tree in Burnet, *Greek Philosophy, Part I.*, Appendix I., p. 357. For Pyrilampes, cf. *Charmides*, 158*a*, and for Demus, *Gorgias*, 481*d* 5, Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 98. According to *Ep.* xiii. 361*e*, Perictione was still alive at the date of writing (*i.e.* about 366), but her death was expected, as Plato speaks of the expense of the funeral as one which he will shortly have to meet. Nothing is known of Pyrilampes after the battle of Delium (424 B.C.).

is real at all, is best intelligible as a consequence of having been "behind the scenes." If he really disliked democracy, it was not with the dislike of ignorance but with that of the man who has known too much.

The actual history of Plato's life up to his sixtieth year is almost a blank. In his own dialogues he makes a practice of silence about himself, only broken once in the *Apology*, where he names himself as one of the friends who urged Socrates to increase the amount of the fine he proposed on himself from one mina to thirty and offered to give security for the payment, and again in the *Phaedo*, where he mentions an illness as the explanation of his absence from the death-scene.[1] Aristotle adds the one further detail that Plato had been "in his youth familiar with" the Heraclitean Cratylus, though we cannot be absolutely sure that this is more than a conjecture of Aristotle's own. The later writers of the extant *Lives* of Plato add some details, but these are mainly of a purely anecdotal kind and not to be implicitly trusted. In any case their scraps of anecdote throw no light on Plato's life or character and we may safely neglect them here. All we can be sure of, down to Plato's twenty-sixth year, is that the influence of friendship with Socrates must have been the most potent force in the moulding of his mind. (We may add that if Aristotle's statement about Cratylus[2] really is more than an inference, the Heraclitean doctrine, learned from Cratylus, that the world disclosed to us by our senses is a scene of incessant and incalculable mutability and variation, was one which Plato never forgot. He drew, says Aristotle, the conclusion that since there is genuine science, that of which science treats must be something other than this unresting "flux" of sense-appearances.)

The gossiping Alexandrian biographers represented Plato as "hearing" Socrates at the age of eighteen or twenty. This cannot mean that his first introduction to Socrates took place at that age. We know from Plato himself that Socrates had made the close acquaintance of Plato's uncle Charmides in the year 431, and was even then familiar with Critias.[3] Presumably Plato's acquaintance with Socrates, then, went back as far as he could remember. The Alexandrian tales will only mean that Plato became a "disciple" of Socrates as soon as he was an ἔφηβος or "adolescent," a period of life currently reckoned as beginning at eighteen and ending at twenty. Even with this explanation the story is probably not accurate. Both Plato and Isocrates, his older contemporary, emphatically deny that Socrates ever had any actual "disciples" whom he "instructed," and Plato himself, in a letter written nearly at the end of his life, puts the matter in a truer light. He tells us there that at the time of the "oligarchical" usurpation of 404–3, being still a very young man, he was looking forward to a political career and was urged by relatives who were among the revolutionaries (no doubt, Critias and Charmides) to enter public life

[1] *Apology*, 38*b* 6, *Phaedo*, 59*b* 10. [2] Aristotle, *Met.* 987*a* 32.
[3] See the opening pages of the *Charmides*.

under their auspices, but waited to see first what their policy would be. He was horrified to find that they soon showed signs of lawless violence, and finally disgusted when they attempted to make his "elderly friend Socrates," the best man of his time, an accomplice in the illegal arrest and execution of a fellow-citizen whose property they intended to confiscate. The leaders of restored democracy did worse, for they actually put Socrates to death on an absurd charge of impiety. This, Plato says, put an end to his own political aspirations. For in politics nothing can be achieved without a party, and the treatment of Socrates by both the Athenian factions proved that there was no party at Athens with whom an honourable man could work. The suggestion clearly made here is that Plato did not regard Socrates as, properly speaking, a master. He loved him personally as a young man loves a revered elder friend, and he thought of him as a martyr. But it was not until the actual execution of Socrates opened his eyes once for all that he gave up his original intention of taking up active political life as his career. His original aspirations had been those of the social and legislative reformer, not those of the thinker or man of science.[1]

Hermodorus,[2] an original member of Plato's Academy, stated that for the moment the friends of Socrates felt themselves in danger just after his death, and that Plato in particular, with others, withdrew for a while to the neighbouring city of Megara under the protection of Euclides of that city, a philosopher who was among the foreign friends present at the death of Socrates and combined certain Socratic tenets with the Eleaticism of Parmenides. This temporary concentration at Megara presumably would only last until the feelings aroused in connexion with the *cause célèbre* had had time to blow over. The biographers narrate that it was followed by some years of travel to Cyrene, Italy, and Egypt, and that the Academy was then founded on Plato's return to Athens. How much of this story—none of it rests, like the mention of the sojourn in Megara, on the evidence of Hermodorus—may be true, is very doubtful. Plato himself, in the letter already alluded to, merely says that he visited Italy and Sicily at the age of forty and was repelled by the sensual luxury of the life led there by the well-to-do. His language on the whole implies that most of the time between this journey and the death of Socrates had been spent at Athens, watching the public conduct of the city and drawing the conclusion that good government can only be expected when "either true and genuine philosophers find their way to political authority or powerful politicians by the favour of Providence take to true philosophy." He says nothing of travels in Africa or Egypt, though some of the observations made in the *Laws* about the art and music, the arithmetic and the games of the Egyptian children have the appearance of being first-hand. The one fateful result of Plato's "travels," in any case, is that he won the whole-hearted devotion of a young man of ability and

[1] See the full explanation of all this at *Ep.* vii. 324*b* 8–326*b* 4. [2] D.L., iii. 6.

promise, Dion, son-in-law of the reigning "tyrant" of Syracuse, Dionysius I.[1]

The founding of the Academy is the turning-point in Plato's life, and in some ways the most memorable event in the history of Western European science. For Plato it meant that, after long waiting, he had found his true work in life. He was henceforth to be the first president of a permanent institution for the prosecution of science by original research. In one way the career was not a wholly unprecedented one. Plato's rather older contemporary Isocrates presided in the same way over an establishment for higher education, and it is likely that his school was rather the older of the two. The novel thing about the Platonic Academy was that it was an institution for the prosecution of *scientific* study. Isocrates, like Plato, believed in training young men for public life. But unlike Plato he held the opinion of the "man in the street" about the uselessness of science. It was his boast that the education he had to offer was not founded on hard and abstract science with no visible humanistic interest about it; he professed to teach "opinions," as we should say, to provide the ambitious aspirant to public life with "points of view," and to train him to express his "point of view" with the maximum of polish and persuasiveness. This is just the aim of "journalism" in its best forms, and Isocrates is the spiritual father of all the "essayists," from his own day to ours, who practise the agreeable and sometimes beneficial art of saying nothing, or saying the commonplace, in a perfect style. He would be the "Greek Addison" but for the fact that personally he was a man of real discernment in political matters and, unlike Addison, really had something to say. But it is needless to remark that an education in humanistic commonplace has never really proved the right kind of training to turn out great men of action. Plato's rival scheme meant the practical application to education of the conviction which had become permanent with him that the hope of the world depends on the union of political power and genuine science. This is why the pure mathematics—the one department of sheer hard thinking which had attained any serious development in the fourth century B.C.—formed the backbone of the curriculum, and why in the latter part of the century the two types of men who were successfully turned out in the Academy were original mathematicians and skilled legislators and admini-

[1] I have said nothing of the story related, *e.g.*, in D.L., iii., 18–21, that Dionysius I had Plato kidnapped and handed over to a Spartan admiral who exposed him for sale at Aegina, where he was ransomed by an acquaintance from Cyrene. The story, though quite possible, seems not too probable, and looks to be no more than an anecdote intended to blacken the character of Dionysius, who in fact, though masterful enough, was neither brute nor fool. In spite of the counter-assertion of Diels, it is pretty certainly *not* referred to in Aristotle, *Physics*, B 199*b* 13. Simplicius seems clearly right in supposing that Aristotle's allusion is to some situation in a comedy. The statement that Dionysius *attempted* to kidnap Plato is made earlier by Cornelius Nepos, *Dion*, c. 2, and perhaps comes from the Sicilian historian Timaeus.

strators, a point on which we shall have a word or two to say in the sequel. It is this, too, which makes the Academy the direct progenitor of the mediaeval and modern university: a university which aims at supplying the State with legislators and administrators whose intellects have been developed in the first instance by the disinterested pursuit of truth for its own sake is still undertaking, under changed conditions, the very task Plato describes as the education of the "philosopher king." The immediate and perceptible outward sign of the new order of things in the Greek world is that whereas in the age of Plato's birth aspiring young Athenians had to depend for their "higher education" on the lectures of a peripatetic foreign "sophist," in the Athens of fifty years later aspiring young men from all quarters flocked to Athens to learn from Isocrates or Plato or both. The travelling lecturer was replaced by the university or college with a fixed domicile and a constitution.

Unfortunately the exact date of the foundation of the Academy is unknown. From the obvious connexion between its programme and the conviction Plato speaks of having definitely reached at the time when he visited Italy and Sicily at the age of forty, we should naturally suppose that the foundation took place about this time (388–7 B.C.); and it is easier to suppose that the visit to Sicily preceded it, as the later biographical statements assume, than that it followed directly on its inception. If there is any truth in the statement that the real object of Plato's journey was to visit the Pythagoreans, who were beginning to be formed into a school again under Archytas of Tarentum, we may suppose that it was precisely the purpose of founding the Academy which led Plato just at this juncture to the very quarter where he might expect to pick up useful hints and suggestions for his guidance; but this can be no more than a conjecture.

We have to think of Plato for the next twenty years as mainly occupied with the onerous work of organizing and maintaining his school. "Lecturing" would be part of this work, and we know from Aristotle that Plato did actually "lecture" without a manuscript at a much later date. But the delivery of these lectures would be only a small part of the work to be done. It was one of Plato's firmest convictions that nothing really worth knowing can be learned by merely listening to "instruction"; the only true method of "learning" science is that of being actually engaged, in company with a more advanced mind, in the discovery of scientific truth.[1] Very little in the way of actual "new theorems" is ascribed to Plato by the later writers on the history of mathematical science, but the men trained in his school or closely associated with it made all the great advances achieved in the interval between the downfall of the original Pythagorean order about the middle of the fifth century and the rise of the specialist schools of Alexandria in the

[1] *Ep.* vii. 341*d–e*. See the comments on this passage in Burnet, *Greek Philosophy, Part I.*, 220–222.

third. In estimating Plato's work for science it is necessary to take account first and foremost of the part he must have played as the organizer and director of the studies of this whole brilliant group. It was, no doubt, this which induced the first mathematician of the time, Eudoxus of Cnidus, to transport himself and his scholars bodily from Cyzicus to Athens to make common cause with the Academy. Probably we are not to think of Plato as writing much during these twenty years. He would be too busy otherwise, and, as we shall see, there is the strongest reason for thinking that most of his dialogues, including all those which are most generally known to-day, were all composed by his fortieth year, or soon after, while the important half-dozen or so which must be assigned to a later date most probably belong definitely to his old age.

In the year 367 something happened which provided Plato, now a man of sixty, with the great adventure of his life. Dionysius I of Syracuse, who had long governed his native city nominally as annually elected *generalissimo*, really as autocrat or "tyrant," died. He was succeeded by his son Dionysius II, a man of thirty whose education had been neglected and had left him totally unfitted to take up his father's great task of checking the expansion of the Carthaginians, which was threatening the very existence of Greek civilization in Western Sicily. The strong man of Syracuse at the moment was Dion, brother-in-law of the new "tyrant," the same who had been so powerfully attached to Plato twenty years before. Dion, a thorough believer in Plato's views about the union of political power with science, conceived the idea of fetching Plato personally to Syracuse to attempt the education of his brother-in-law. Plato felt that the prospect of success was not promising, but the Carthaginian danger was very real, if the new ruler of Syracuse should prove unequal to his work, and it would be an everlasting dishonour to the Academy if no attempt were made to put its theory into practice when the opportunity offered at such a critical juncture. Accordingly Plato, though with a great deal of misgiving, made up his mind to accept Dion's invitation.

If the *Epistles* ascribed in our Plato MSS. to Plato are genuine (as I have no doubt that the great bulk of them are), they throw a sudden flood of light on Plato's life for the next few years. To understand the situation we must bear two things in mind. Plato's object was not, as has been fancied, the ridiculous one of setting up in the most luxurious of Greek cities a pinchbeck imitation of the imaginary city of the *Republic*. It was the practical and statesman-like object of trying to fit the young Dionysius for the immediate practical duty of checking the Carthaginians[1] and, if possible, expelling them from Sicily, by making Syracuse the centre of a strong constitutional monarchy to embrace the whole body of Greek communities in the west of the island. Also, Plato's belief in the value of a hard scientific education for a ruler of men, wise or not, was absolutely genuine. Accordingly he at once set about the task

[1] *Ep.* vii. 333*a* 1, viii. 353*a*.

from the beginning and made Dionysius enter on a serious course of geometry. For a little while things looked promising. Dionysius became attached to Plato and geometry the "fashion" at his court. But the scheme wrecked on a double obstacle. Dionysius was too feeble of character and his education had been left neglected too long, and his personal jealousies of his stronger and older relative were easily awakened. In a few months the situation became strained. Dion had to go into what was virtually banishment and Plato returned to Athens. Relations, however, were not broken off. Dionysius kept up a personal correspondence with Plato about his studies and projects, and Plato endeavoured to reconcile Dionysius and Dion. This proved not feasible when Dionysius not only confiscated Dion's revenues but forced his wife, for dynastic reasons, to marry another man. Yet Plato made another voyage to Syracuse and spent nearly a year there (361–360) in the hope of remedying the situation. On this occasion something was really done on the task of drafting the preliminaries to a constitution for the proposed federation of the Greek cities, but the influence of the partisans of the old *régime* proved too strong. Plato seems at one time to have been in real personal danger from the hostility of Dionysius' barbarian body-guards, and it was with difficulty and only by the mediation of Archytas of Tarentum that he finally obtained leave to return to Athens (360 B.C.).

At this point Plato's personal intervention in Sicilian politics ceases. The quarrel between Dion and Dionysius naturally went on, and Dion, whose one great fault, as Plato tells him, was want of "adaptability" and *savoir-faire*, made up his mind to recover his rights with the strong hand. Enlistment went on in the Peloponnese and elsewhere, with the active concurrence of many of the younger members of the Academy, and in the summer of 357 Dion made a sudden and successful dash across the water, captured Syracuse, and proclaimed its "freedom." Plato wrote him a letter of congratulation on the success, but warned him of his propensity to carry things with too high a hand and reminded him that the world would expect the "You-know-who's" (the Academy) [1] to set a model of good behaviour. Unfortunately Dion was too good and too bad at once for the situation. Like Plato himself, he believed in strong though law-abiding personal rule and disgusted the Syracusan mob by not restoring "democratic" licence; he had not the tact to manage disappointed associates, quarrelled with his admiral Heraclides and at last made away with him, or connived at his being made away with. Dion was in turn murdered with great treachery by another of his subordinates, Callippus, who is said by later writers to have been a member of the Academy, though this seems hard to reconcile with Plato's own statement that the link of association between the two was not "philosophy" but the mere accident of having been initiated together into certain "mysteries." Plato still believed strongly in the fundamental honesty and sanity of

[1] *Ep.* iv. 320 *c–e*, and for Dion's want of "tact," *ibid.* 321*b*, vii. 328*b*.

Dion's political aims and wrote two letters to the remnants of his party, justifying the common policy of Dion and himself and calling on them to be faithful to it, and making suggestions for conciliation of parties which were, of course, not accepted. As he said in one of these letters, the fatal disunion of parties seemed likely to leave Sicily a prey either to the Carthaginians or to the Oscans of South Italy.[1]

It is not necessary to follow the miserable story of events in Syracuse beyond the point where Plato's concern with them ends. But it is worth while to remark that Plato's forecast of events was fully justified. The " unification of Sicily," when it came at last, came as a fruit of the success of the Romans in the first two Punic wars; and, as Professor Burnet has said, this was the beginning of the long series of events which has made the cleavage between Eastern Europe, deriving what civilization it has direct from Constantinople, and Western Europe with its latinized Hellenism. If Plato had succeeded at Syracuse, there might have been no " schism of the churches " and no " Eastern problem " to-day.

Nothing is known, beyond an anecdote or two not worth recording, of Plato's latest years. All that we can say is that he must still have gone on from time to time lecturing to his associates in the Academy, since Aristotle, who only entered the Academy in 367, was one of his hearers, and that the years between 360 and his death must have been busily occupied with the composition of his longest and ripest contribution to the literature of moral and political philosophy, the *Laws*. Probably also, all the rest of the dialogues which manifestly belong to the later part of Plato's life must be supposed to have been written after his final return from Sicily. A complete suspension of composition for several years will best explain the remarkable difference in style between all of them and even the maturest of those which preceded. It may be useful to remember that of the years mentioned as marking important events in Plato's life, the year 388 is that of the capture of Rome by the Gauls, 367 the traditional date of the " Licinian rogations " and the defeat of the Gauls at Alba by Camillus, 361 that of the penetration of the Gauls into Campania.

See further:

BURNET, J.—*Greek Philosophy, Part I.*, Chapters xii., xv.
BURNET, J.—*Platonism* (1928).
FRIEDLANDER, P.—*Platon: Eidos, Paideia, Dialogos* (1928).
GROTE, G.—*Plato and the other Companions of Socrates*, Chapter v.
RITTER, C.—*Platon*, i., Chapters i.–v. (Munich, 1914.)
WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, U. v.—*Platon.* (Ed. 2. Berlin, 1920.)
STENZEL, J.—*Platon der Erzieher.* (Leipzig, 1928.)

The general historical background of Plato's life may be studied in any good history of Greece. Specially excellent is

MEYER, E.—*Geschichte des Altertums*, vol. v. (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1902.)
ROBIN, L.—*Platon*, pp. 1–8.

CHAPTER II

THE PLATONIC WRITINGS

I

PLATO is the one voluminous author of classical antiquity whose works seem to have come down to us whole and entire. Nowhere in later antiquity do we come on any reference to a Platonic work which we do not still possess. It is true that we know nothing of the contents of Plato's lectures except from a few scanty notices in Aristotle or quotations preserved from contemporaries of Aristotle by the Aristotelian commentators. But the explanation of this seems to be that Plato habitually lectured without any kind of manuscript. This explains why Aristotle speaks of certain doctrines as taught in the "unwritten teaching" (ἄγραφα δόγματα) of his master, and why at least five of the auditors of a particularly famous lecture (that on "The Good"), including both Aristotle and Xenocrates, published their own recollections of it. We must suppose that Plato's written dialogues were meant to appeal to the "educated" at large and interest them in philosophy; the teaching given to Plato's personal associates depended for its due appreciation on the actual contact of mind with mind within the school and was therefore not committed to writing at all. As we shall see later on, this has had the (for us) unfortunate result that we are left to learn Plato's inmost ultimate convictions on the most important questions, the very thing we most want to know, from references in Aristotle, polemical in object, always brief, and often puzzling in the highest degree.

When we turn to the contents of our manuscripts, the first problem which awaits us is that of weeding out from the whole collection what is dubious or certainly spurious. We may start with the fact that certain insignificant items of the collection were already recognized as spurious when the arrangement of the dialogues which we find in our oldest Plato MSS. was made. By counting each dialogue great or small as a unit, and reckoning the collection of *Epistles* also as one dialogue, a list of thirty-six works was drawn up, arranged in "tetralogies" or groups of four. It is not absolutely certain by whom or when this arrangement was made, though it certainly goes back almost to the beginning of the Christian era and perhaps earlier. It is commonly ascribed by later writers to a certain Thrasylus or to Thrasylus and Dercylides. The date of

neither of these scholars is known with certainty. Thrasylus has been usually identified with a rhetorician of that name living under Augustus and Tiberius. But it is notable that Cicero's contemporary, the antiquary M. Terentius Varro, refers [1] to a passage of the *Phaedo* as occurring in the "fourth roll" of Plato, and the *Phaedo* actually happens to be the fourth dialogue of the first "tetralogy." Hence it has been suggested that the arrangement is older than Varro. If this is correct, it will follow that either Thrasylus has been wrongly identified or the arrangement was merely adopted, not originated, by him. On the other hand, this grouping cannot be *earlier* than the first or second century B.C. For Diogenes Laertius [2] informs us that an earlier arrangement of the dialogues in "trilogies" had been attempted, though not carried completely through, by the famous third-century scholar Aristophanes of Byzantium. There is no hint anywhere that the "tetralogies" of Thrasylus admitted any work not regarded as Platonic by Aristophanes or excluded any which he had admitted. We may fairly conclude that the thirty-six "dialogues" were currently regarded as genuine by the librarians and scholars of the third century B.C. As far as the extant dialogues omitted from the "tetralogies" go, there is no question that they are one and all spurious, and no one proposes to reverse the judgment of antiquity on any of them. The same thing is true of the collection of "definitions" also preserved in Plato MSS. There is no doubt that in the main the definitions of the collection are genuinely ancient and Academic. Some of them are actually extracted from the Platonic dialogues; others are shown to be Academic by their coincidence with Academic definitions used or commented on by Aristotle in his *Topics*. But since some of them can be pretty clearly identified with definitions we can prove to be characteristic of Plato's immediate successors, Speusippus and Xenocrates, we cannot regard the collection as the work of Plato. Our only real problem is whether the list of the thirty-six dialogues must not be further reduced by the elimination of spurious items. Even in antiquity there were doubts about one or two dialogues. The *Alcibiades II* [3] was thought to be unauthentic by some, and the Neoplatonist Proclus wished to reject the *Epinomis*. In modern times doubt has been carried much farther. In the middle of the nineteenth century, especially in Germany, the "athetizing" of Platonic dialogues became a fashionable amusement for scholars; the *Laws* was pronounced spurious by Ast and, at one time, by Zeller, the *Parmenides*, *Sophistes*, and *Politicus* by Ueberweg and others; extremists wished to limit the number of genuine dialogues to nine. Fortunately the tide has turned, since the elaborate proof of the genuineness of the *Sophistes* and *Politicus* by Lewis Campbell. There is now a general agreement that every dialogue of any length and interest in the list of the thirty-

[1] Varro, *de lingua Latina*, vii. 88. [2] D. L., iii. 61–62.

[3] Athenaeus (506*e*) records an opinion which ascribed the dialogue to Xenophon.

six is Platonic, and an equally general agreement about the spuriousness of a number of the smaller and less interesting, though there still remain one or two works about which opinion is divided. Thus there is little doubt of the un-Platonic character of the following works: *Alcibiades II*, *Hipparchus*, *Amatores* (or *Rivales*), *Theages*, *Clitophon*, *Minos*. Opinion may be said to be divided about *Alcibiades I*, *Ion*, *Menexenus*, *Hippias Major*, *Epinomis*, *Epistles*. The scope of the present work allows me only to make one or two very brief remarks on the subject.

As to the now generally rejected dialogues it may be observed that they are all brief and of no great moment. Our conception of Plato as a thinker and a writer is not seriously affected by the rejection of any of them. If it were possible to put in a word on behalf of any of these items, I should like personally to plead for the short sketch called the *Clitophon*, which seems to be in any case a mere unfinished fragment, the main purport of which can only be conjectured. The style and verve are not unworthy of Plato, and I believe I could make out a case for the view that the point to which the writer is working up is also Platonic, as well as important. Yet there is the difficulty that the little work appears on the face of it to be in form a criticism of the parts played by Socrates and Thrasymachus in *Republic I*, and it is hard to think of Plato as thus playing the critic to one of his own writings.

About all these dialogues we may say at least two things. There is only one of them (the *Alcibiades II*) which does not seem to be proved by considerations of style and language to be real fourth-century work. And again, there is no reason to regard any of them as "spurious" in the sense of being intended to pass falsely for the work of Plato. They are anonymous and inferior work of the same kind as the lighter Platonic dialogues, and probably, in most cases, contemporary with them or nearly so, not deliberate "forgeries." Hence this material may rightly be used with caution as contributing to our knowledge of the conception of Socrates current in the fourth century. *Alcibiades II* is probably an exception. It is the one dialogue in the list which exhibits anything very suspicious on linguistic grounds, and it appears also to allude to a characteristic Stoic paradox.[1] But, even in this case, there is no ground to suppose that the unknown writer intended his work to pass current as Plato's. A little more must be said of the dialogues which are still rejected by some scholars, but defended by others. The *Alcibiades I* has nothing in its language which requires a date later than the death of Plato, and nothing in its

[1] There seems to be a definite polemic running through the dialogue against the Stoic thesis that every one but the Stoic "sage" is insane. Cf. in particular *Alc. II*, 139*c*–140*d*. (Personally I regard the attack on this paradox as the main object of the work.) Hence it cannot date from any period of the Academy before the presidency of Arcesilaus (276–241 B.C.), with whom anti-Stoic polemic became the main public interest of the school For a discussion of the question see *Appendix*, pp. 528–9.

contents which is not thoroughly Platonic. In fact, it forms, as the Neoplatonic commentators saw, an excellent introduction to the whole Platonic ethical and political philosophy. It is just this character which is really the most suspicious thing about the dialogue. It is far too methodical not to suggest that it is meant as a kind of "textbook," the sort of thing Plato declared he would never write. And the character-drawing is far too vague and shadowy for Plato even in his latest and least dramatic phase. In the interlocutors, though they bear the names Socrates and Alcibiades, there is no trace of any genuine individuality—far less than there is even in the anonymous speakers in the *Laws*. It is a further difficulty that on grounds of style and manner the dialogue, if genuine, would have to be assigned to a late period in Plato's life when he is hardly likely to have been composing such work. On the whole, it seems probable that *Alcibiades I* is the work of an immediate disciple, probably written within a generation or so of Plato's death and possibly even before that event.

The *Ion*, so far as can be seen, has in its few pages nothing either to establish its authenticity or to arouse suspicion. It may reasonably be allowed to pass as genuine until some good reason for rejecting it is produced.

The *Menexenus* offers a difficult problem. It is referred to expressly by Aristotle in a way in which he never seems to quote any dialogues but those of Plato, and it seems clear that he regarded it as Platonic.[1] On the other hand, the contents of the work are singular. It is mainly given up to the recital by Socrates of a "funeral discourse" on the Athenians who fell in the Corinthian war. Socrates pretends to have heard the discourse from Aspasia and to admire it greatly. Apparently the intention is to produce a gravely ironical satire on the curious jumble of real and spurious patriotism characteristic of the λόγοι ἐπιτάφιοι, which are being quietly burlesqued. The standing mystery for commentators is, of course, the audacious anachronism by which Socrates (and, what is even worse, Aspasia) is made to give a narrative of events belonging to the years after Socrates' own death. To me it seems clear that this violation of chronological possibility, since it must have been committed at a time when the facts could not be unknown, must be intentional, however hard it is to divine its precise point, and that Plato is more likely than any disciple in the Academy to have ventured on it. (As the second part of the *Parmenides* proves, Plato had a certain "freakish" humour in him which could find strange outlets.) And I find it very hard to suppose that Aristotle was deceived on a question of Platonic authorship. Hence it seems best to accept the traditional ascription of the *Menexenus*, however hard we may think it to account for its character.

The *Hippias Major*, though not cited by name anywhere in Aristotle, is tacitly quoted or alluded to several times in the *Topics* in a way which convinces me that Aristotle regarded it as a Platonic

[1] Aristot. *Rhetoric*, 1415*b* 30.

work.[1] As the "athetizers" have really nothing to urge on the other side except that the dialogue is not Plato at his best, and that there are an unusual word or two to be found in it (as there are in many Platonic dialogues), I think Aristotle's allusions should decide the question of genuineness favourably.

The *Epinomis* and *Epistles* are much more important. If the *Epinomis* is spurious, we must deny the authenticity of the most important pronouncement on the philosophy of arithmetic to be found in the whole Platonic *corpus*. If the *Epistles* are spurious, we lose our one direct source of information for any part of Plato's biography, and also the source of most of our knowledge of Sicilian affairs from 367 to 354. (As E. Meyer says, the historians who reject the *Epistles* disguise the state of the case by alleging Plutarch's *Life of Dion* as their authority, while the statements in this *Life* are openly drawn for the most part from the *Epistles*.) Documents like these ought not to be surrendered to the "athetizer" except for very weighty reasons.

As to the *Epinomis* the case stands thus. It was certainly known in antiquity generally and regarded as genuine. Cicero, for example, quotes it as "Plato." On the other hand, the Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus (410–485 A.D.) wished to reject it as spurious because of an astronomical discrepancy with the *Timaeus*. Diogenes Laertius also tells us that Plato's *Laws* were "copied out from the wax" by the Academic astronomer Philippus of Opus, adding "and his too, as they say, is the *Epinomis*." It has become common in recent times to assert, on the strength of this remark, that the *Epinomis* is an appendix to the *Laws* composed by Philippus. It ought, however, to be noted that Proclus was apparently unaware that any doubt had been felt about the *Epinomis* before his own time, since he based his rejection wholly on argument, not on testimony. His argument is, moreover, a bad one, since the "discrepancy with the *Timaeus*" of which he complained is found as much in the *Laws* as in the *Epinomis*. The internal evidence of style seems to reveal no difference whatever between the two works. And it may be urged that since the state of the text of the *Laws* shows that the work must have been left at Plato's death without the author's final revision and then circulated without even the small verbal corrections which the editor of a posthumous work commonly has to make in the interests of grammar, it is most unlikely that disciples who treated the *ipsissima verba* of a dead master with such scrupulous veneration would have ventured on adding a "part the last" to the work on their own account. Hence it seems to me that Hans Raeder is right in insisting on the genuineness of the *Epinomis*, and that the remark of Diogenes about Philippus of Opus only means

[1] Twice for the unsatisfactory definition of τὸ καλόν as τὸ πρέπον (*Topics*, A5. 102*a* 6, E5. 135*a* 13); once for the still worse definition of καλόν as τὸ δι' ὄψεως ἢ ἀκοῆς ἡδύ (*Topics*, Z6. 146*a* 22). That both these bad attempts at definition occur in the dialogue seems to make it clear that Aristotle is alluding to it and not to any other source.

that he did for this work was also transcribed by, or perhaps dictated to, him. (The now customary disparagement of the *Epinomis* seems to me due to mere inability to follow the mathematics of the dialogue.[1])

Professor Werner Jaeger [2] has incidentally done a service to the student of the *Epinomis* in his recent work on the development of Aristotle's thought by showing that there is an intimate connexion between the *Laws* and *Epinomis* and Aristotle's work περὶ φιλοσοφίας, of which only fragments are now extant. In particular, as he shows, there is an immediate connexion between the "fifth" or "etherial" bodily region of the *Epinomis* and Aristotle's famous "celestial matter" of which the "heavens" are assumed to be made (the *essentia quinta* or *materia coelestis*). Professor Jaeger interprets the connexion thus. We have first the *Laws* circulated promptly after Plato's death, then Aristotle's proposals for modifications of Platonic doctrine in the περὶ φιλοσοφίας, finally (all in the course of a year or two), the *Epinomis*, rejoining to Aristotle, and composed by Philippus. While I regard Professor Jaeger's proof of the intimate relation between *Epinomis* and περὶ φιλοσοφίας as important, I think it more natural to interpret the facts rather differently by supposing the *Laws* and *Epinomis* together to have been transcribed and circulated shortly after the death of Plato, and then followed by Aristotle's criticism of Platonic doctrine in the περὶ φιλοσοφίας. This at least leaves Aristotle more leisure than Professor Jaeger's hypothesis for the composition of a work which, as we know it ran to three "books," must have been of considerable compass. Whatever the truth about the *Epinomis* may be, I am at least sure that it is premature to assume that it is known not to be Plato's.

As for the *Epistles*, it is not necessary now to argue the case for their genuineness as elaborately as one would have had to do some years ago. Since Wilamowitz in his *Platon* declared for the genuineness of the very important trio VI, VII, VIII, those who depend on "authority" for their opinions have been in a hurry to protest that these three at least must be accepted. But the acceptance of the three logically carries with it recognition of the correspondence between Plato and Dionysius (II, III, XIII) and the letter of congratulation and good advice to Dion (IV); and when these are accepted as Platonic, there remains no good ground for rejecting any of the thirteen letters of our MSS. except the first, which is written in a style wholly unlike the others, and by some one whose circumstances, as stated by himself, show that he can be neither Plato nor Dion, nor have any intention of passing for either. Presumably this letter got into the correspondence by some mistake at a very early date. The twelfth letter (a mere note of half a dozen lines) was apparently suspected in later antiquity, since our

[1] For a good recent defence of the dialogue see the discussion in H. Raeder, *Platons philosophische Entwickelung*, 413 ff. and cf. *infra*, pp. 497–8.

[2] Jaeger, *Aristoteles*, c. 2.

best MSS. have a note to that effect. No grounds have ever been produced for questioning the authenticity of any of the rest which will bear examination. Most of the difficulties raised in modern times, especially those alleged in connexion with II and XIII, rest on mere misunderstandings. It is safe to say that the present tendency to accept only VI, VII, VIII is a consequence of mere servile deference to the name of Wilamowitz. None of these documents should have needed the imprimatur of a professor as a recommendation; their acceptance is bound to lead logically to that of the rest with the exception of I and *possibly* XII. As far as external testimony goes, it is enough to say that Aristophanes of Byzantium included in his "trilogies" *Epistles* (pretty obviously our thirteen, or we should have heard more about the matter), and that Cicero quotes IV, IX, and especially VII (*nobilissima illa epistula*, as he calls it) as familiar Platonic material. This, taken together with the thoroughly Platonic style of the letters, disposes of the notion that they can be "forgeries." The art of writing such prose was already dead in half a century after Plato's death, and the revival of "Atticism," which might make such a production barely conceivable, belongs to a time some generations later than Cicero.[1]

II

To understand a great thinker is, of course, impossible unless we know something of the relative order of his works, and of the actual period of his life to which they belong. What, for example, could we make of Kant if we did not know whether the *Critique of Pure Reason* was the work of ambitious youth or of ripe middle age, whether it was written before or after the discourse on the *Only Possible Demonstration of the Being of a God* or the *Dreams of a Ghost-seer*? We cannot, then, even make a beginning with the study of Plato until we have found some trustworthy indication of the order in which his works, or at least the most significant of them, were written. Even when we have fixed this order, if it can be fixed, we need, for a completer understanding, to be able also to say at what precise period of life the most important dialogues were written,

[1] The reader will find an elaborate collection of linguistic and other arguments against the *Epistles* in the section devoted to them in H. Richards' *Platonica*, 254–298, and, as regards most of the series, in C. Ritter, *Neue Untersuchungen ueber Platon*, 327–424. Most of the alleged objections appear frivolous, or at best based on misreading of the Syracusan situation. Why the German critics in general think that it is in some way "unworthy" of Plato to have had a "business settlement" with Dionysius such as that to which *Ep.* xiii. relates is to me as unintelligible as Wilamowitz's assertion that the statements of the same letter about the great age of Plato's mother and the existence of four nieces for whom he may have to provide must be fiction. Old ladies do sometimes live to over ninety, and any man of sixty may quite well have four nieces. The names of Bentley, Cobet, Grote, Blass, E. Meyer, are enough to show that there is plenty of good "authority" for belief in the *Epistles*. See *Appendix*, pp. 541–544, for further discussion.

whether in early manhood, in mid life, or in old age, and again whether they are an unbroken series of compositions or whether there is evidence of a considerable gap or gaps in Plato's literary activity. These are the questions which we have now to face.

The external evidence supplied by trustworthy testimony only assures us on one point. Aristotle tells us (*Pol.* 1264*b* 26), what could in any case never have been doubted, that the *Laws* is later than the *Republic*. There was also an ancient tradition, mentioned by Proclus and implied in the statement of Diogenes Laertius about Philippus of Opus, that the *Laws* was left by Plato "in the wax," and the "fair copy" for circulation made after his death. The statement is borne out by the frequency in the dialogue of small grammatical difficulties which cannot reasonably be ascribed to later "corruption," but are natural in a faithfully copied first text which has never received the author's finishing touches. Trustworthy testimony takes us no farther than this. Comparison of certain Platonic dialogues with one another yields one or two other results. Thus the *Republic* must be earlier than the *Timaeus*, where it is referred to and the argument of its first five books briefly recapitulated. The *Politicus* must be not earlier than the *Sophistes*, to which it is the professed sequel; and the *Sophistes*, for the same reason, later than the *Theaetetus*. These are all the certain indications furnished by the matter of the dialogues themselves. There *may* be an allusion in the *Phaedo* to a point more fully explained in the *Meno*, and the *Republic* has been supposed to allude to both. Both the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophistes* refer to a meeting between Socrates, then extremely young, and the great Parmenides; and there must be some connexion between these references and the fact that the *Parmenides* professes ostensibly to describe this encounter. But we cannot say that the allusions enable us to determine with certainty whether the *Parmenides* is earlier than both the others, later than both, or intermediate between the two. Raeder has tried to show at length that the *Phaedrus* contains allusions which would only be intelligible to readers who already knew the *Republic*; but there are gaps in his argument, and it has not completely convinced some prominent Platonic scholars. Clearly, if we are to arrive at results of any value, we need a clue to the order of composition of the dialogues which will take us much farther than the few certain indications we have so far found.

In the earlier part of the nineteenth century more than one unsatisfactory attempt was made to provide such a clue. Thus it was at one time held that we can detect signs of comparative youth in the gorgeous rhetoric of certain dialogues, and the *Phaedrus* in particular was often assumed to be the earliest of the dialogues on this ground. But it is obvious that reasoning of this kind is inherently untrustworthy, especially in dealing with the work of a great dramatic artist. Inferences from the manner of the *Phaedrus* are, for example, to be discounted partly on the ground that its rhetoric is largely parody of the rhetoricians, partly because so

much of its content is imaginative myth which lends itself naturally to a high-flown diction. The assumption that works in which there is a large element of semi-poetical myth must be "juvenile" obviously rests on another assumption, for which we have no evidence at all, that we know independently what the personal temperament of the youthful Plato was. We have only to think of the known chronological order of the works of Goethe to see how unsound a method must be which would require us to regard the second part of *Faust* or *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* as juvenile productions. A still more arbitrary assumption underlies the attempt of E. Munk to arrange the dialogues in order on the assumption that the age ascribed to Socrates in a dialogue is an indication of its date. On the theory that dialogues which represent Socrates as a young man must be early, those which represent him as old, late, we should have to put the *Parmenides*, where Socrates is "very young," at the opening of the series, the *Theaetetus*, which narrates a conversation held just before his trial, at the other end, though the allusion in the one dialogue to the meeting which provides the setting for the other shows that they are probably not to be separated by too long an interval.

The serious scientific investigation of the internal evidence for the order of composition of the dialogues really begins in 1867 with Lewis Campbell's philological proof of the genuineness of the *Sophistes* and *Politicus*. It has been further developed, sometimes with too much confidence in its results, by a whole host of writers, notably Dittenberger and C. Ritter in Germany, and W. Lutoslawski in this country. The underlying and sound principle of the method may be simply stated thus. If we start with two works which are known to be separated by a considerable interval and exhibit a marked difference in style, it may be possible to trace the transition from the writer's earlier to his later manner in detail, to see the later manner steadily more and more replacing the earlier, and this should enable us to arrive at some definite conclusions about the order of the works which occupy the interval. The conclusion will be strengthened if we take for study a number of distinct and independent peculiarities and find a general coincidence in the order in which the various peculiarities seem to become more and more settled mannerisms. The opportunity for applying this method to the work of Plato is afforded by the well-authenticated fact that the *Laws* is a composition of old age, while the *Republic* is one of an earlier period, and forms with certain other great dialogues, such as the *Protagoras*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, a group distinguished by a marked common style and a common vigour of dramatic representation which experience shows we cannot expect from a writer who is not in the prime of his powers. Growing resemblance to the manner of the *Laws*, if made out on several independent but consilient lines of inquiry, may thus enable us to discover which of the Platonic dialogues must be intermediate between the *Laws* and the *Republic*. There are several different peculiarities we may obviously select for

study. Thus one obvious contrast between *Republic* and *Laws* is to be found in the marked decline of dramatic power. A second is that the *Laws* conforms carefully to a whole number of the graces of style introduced into Attic prose by Isocrates, the *Republic* and the other great dramatic dialogues neglect these elegancies. A third line of study which has been very minutely pursued, especially by Lutoslawski, is the examination of special uses of connecting particles throughout the dialogues. Without going into detail, it is enough to say here that the result of these converging lines of study has been to convince students of Platonic language and idiom, almost without an exception, that we can definitely specify a certain group of very important dialogues as belonging to the post-*Republic* period of Plato's life. The group comprises *Theaetetus, Parmenides, Sophistes, Politicus, Timaeus, Philebus, Laws.* The identification of this group of " later " dialogues may be taken as a pretty assured and definite result, not likely ever to be seriously modified.

It is another question whether the employment of the same method would enable us to distinguish more precisely between the earlier and later dialogues belonging to either of the two great groups, so as to say, *e.g.*, whether the *Philebus* is earlier or later in composition than the *Timaeus*, the *Symposium* than the *Phaedo*. When two works belong to much the same period of an author's activity, a slight difference of style between them may easily be due to accidental causes. (Thus in dealing with the *Symposium* we should have to remember that a very large part of it is professed imitation or parody of the styles of others.) Lutoslawski in particular seems to me to have pushed a sound principle to the pitch of absurdity in the attempt, by the help of the integral calculus, to extract from considerations of " stylometry " a detailed and definite order of composition for the whole of the dialogues. It may fairly be doubted whether " stylometric " evidence can carry us much beyond the broad discrimination between an earlier series of dialogues of which the *Republic* is the capital work and a later series composed in the interval between the completion of the *Republic* and Plato's death.

It is possible, however, that some supplementary considerations may take us a little further. Plato himself explains, in the introductory conversation prefixed to the *Theaetetus*, that he has avoided the method of indirect narration of a dialogue for that of direct dialogue in order to avoid the wearisomeness of keeping up the formula of a reported narrative. Now the greatest dialogues of the earlier period, the *Protagoras, Symposium, Phaedo, Republic*, are all reported dialogues, and one of them, the *Symposium*, is actually reported at second-hand. So again is the *Parmenides*, where the standing formula, as Professor Burnet calls it, is the cumbrous "Antiphon told us that Pythodorus said that Parmenides said." The original adoption of this method of narration of a conversation is manifestly due to the desire for dramatic life and colour.

It permits of the sort of record of the by-play between the personages of the story which contributes so much to the charm of the *Phaedo*. But the labour required to keep up the " formula " is so great that it is not surprising that Plato finally dropped it, and that the *Theaetetus* and all the works we find reason to place later are in the form of direct dialogue. To me it seems highly probable, though not certain, that it was the special complication of the formula required for the *Parmenides* which led to the final abandonment of the method, and that we may plausibly infer that the *Parmenides* was written either simultaneously with the *Theaetetus* or immediately before it. Another inference which I should draw with some confidence is that, since no young writer is likely to have made his first prentice experiments in dialogue with so difficult a form, the popular view that the *Protagoras* is one of the earliest of the Platonic dialogues must be erroneous. The certainty and vigour of the dramatic handling of the characters there should prove that the *Protagoras* belongs as a fourth with the *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, and *Republic* to the period of Plato's supreme excellence as a dramatist and stylist. In particular, it must be a considerably later work than the comparatively undramatic and rather unduly diffuse *Gorgias*, a point which has some bearing on the interpretation of the purpose and ethical teaching of the *Protagoras*.

We may turn next to the question whether it is possible to fix any definite date in Plato's life as a *terminus ad quem* for the earlier series of dialogues, or a *terminus a quo* for the later. Something, I believe, may be done to settle both these questions. I have already referred in the last chapter to the statement made by Plato in *Ep.* vii., written after the murder of Dion in the year 354, that he came to Sicily in his forty-first year already convinced that the salvation of mankind depends on the union of the philosopher and the " ruler " in one person. The actual words of the letter are that Plato had been driven to *say* this " in a eulogy on true philosophy," and this seems an unmistakable allusion to the occurrence of the same statement in *Rep.* 499 ff. It should follow that this most philosophically advanced section of the *Republic* was already written in the year 388–7, with the consequence that the *Republic*, and by consequence the earlier dialogues in general, were completed at least soon after Plato was forty and perhaps before foundation of the Academy. If we turn next to the dialogue which seems to prelude to the later group, the *Theaetetus*, we get another indication of date. The dialogue mentions the severe and dangerous wound received by the mathematician Theaetetus in a battle fought under the walls of Corinth which cannot well be any but that of the year 369. It is assumed tacitly all through that Theaetetus will not recover from his injuries and is clear that the discourse was composed after his death and mainly as a graceful tribute to his memory. Thus, allowing for the time necessary for the completion of so considerable a work, we may suppose the dialogue to have been written just before Plato's first departure on his important practical enterprise

at Syracuse. This, as Professor Burnet has said, seems to be the explanation of the magnificent eulogy of the retired and contemplative life, a passage confessed by Plato himself to be an irrelevance so far as the argument of the dialogue is concerned. Plato is giving expression to the reluctance with which he leaves the Academy, at the bidding of duty and honour, for the turmoil and sordidness of the political arena.

Once more, the *Sophistes* seems to give us an approximate date. It is the first of the series of dialogues in which the deliberate adoption of the Isocratean avoidance of hiatus occurs. This would naturally suggest a probable break of some length in Plato's activity as a writer just before the composition of the *Sophistes*. Now it is antecedently probable that there must have been such an interruption between 367 and 360, the year of Plato's last return from Syracuse. His entanglements with Dionysius and Sicilian affairs, combined with his duties as head of the Academy, are likely to have left him little leisure for literary occupation in these years.

Thus we may say with every appearance of probability that there are two distinct periods of literary activity to be distinguished in Plato's life. The first cannot have begun before the death of Socrates; apart from the absurdity of the conception of Plato as "dramatizing" the sayings and doings of the living man whom he revered above all others, it is fairly plain that the original motive for the composition of "discourses of Socrates" by the *viri Socratici* was to preserve the memory of a living presence which they had lost. It apparently continued down to Plato's fortieth or forty-first year and the opening of the Academy, and it includes all the work in which Plato's dramatic art is most fresh and vigorous. The main object of this incessant activity seems to be to immortalize the personality of Socrates. For twenty years after the foundation of the Academy Plato seems to have written nothing, unless the *Phaedrus*, a difficult dialogue to account for on any theory, falls early in this period. This is as it should be: the President of the Academy would for long enough after its foundation be far too busy to write. Then, probably on the eve of the Sicilian adventure, after twenty years of work the Academy is sufficiently organized to leave its head, now a man of some sixty years, leisure to write the *Theaetetus* and *Parmenides*; but an opportunity for continuous writing does not present itself until Plato's final withdrawal from active personal participation in "world politics." The composition of five such works as *Sophistes*, *Politicus*, *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, *Laws*, is a notable achievement for any man between the ages of sixty-seven and eighty-one. But we must think of this work as being executed simultaneously with regular oral exposition of the doctrine described by Aristotle as the "philosophy of Plato." It is an entire misconception to relegate this last stage in the development of Plato's thought, as the textbooks often seem to do, to a "senile" year or two subsequent to the close of Plato's activity as a writer. It must have been contemporary with the writing of the whole

" later " group of dialogues, and the man who was still at his death labouring on the *Laws* can never have sunk into " senility."

See further:

BURNET, J.—*Platonism*, Ch. I, 4.
CAMPBELL, L.—" *Sophistes* " *and* " *Politicus* " *of Plato* (1867), General Introduction.
HACKFORTH, R.—*The Authorship of the Platonic Epistles.* (Manchester, 1913.)
RAEDER, H.—*Platons philosophische Entwickelung.* (Leipzig, 1905.)
LUTOSLAWSKI, W.—*Origin and Growth of Plato's Logic.* (1897.)
PARMENTIER, L.—*La Chronologie des dialogues de Platon.* (Brussels, 1913.)
RITTER, C.—*Untersuchungen ueber Platon.* (Stuttgart, 1882.); *Neue Untersuchungen ueber Platon.* (Munich, 1910.)
LEVI, A.—*Sulle interpretazioni immanentistiche della filosofia di Platone.* (Turin, N.D.)
SHOREY, P.—*The Unity of Plato's Thought.* (Chicago, 1903.)
SHOREY, P.—*What Plato Said*, pp. 58–73.
ROBIN, L.—*Platon*, pp. 19–48.
NOVOTNÝ, F.—*Platonis Epistulae.*
HARWARD, J.—*The Platonic Epistles* (Introduction).

NOTE.—I do not deny that Plato's " first period " may have extended into the opening years of his career in the Academy. On my own reasoning this must be so if the *Phaedo* should, after all, be later than the *Republic*. It has been argued (*e.g.* by M. Parmentier) that the *Symposium* must be later than 385, the year of the death of Aristophanes. I doubt, however, whether too much has not been made of the supposed Platonic rule not to introduce living persons as speakers. Callias was alive and active years after any date to which we can reasonably assign the *Protagoras*. Euclides, who was alive and apparently well when Theaetetus received his wound, is more likely than not to have survived the writing of the *Theaetetus*. Socrates " the younger " can hardly be taken to have been dead when the *Politicus* was written. Gorgias *may* have lived long enough to read the *Gorgias*. Simmias, if we may believe Plutarch *de genio Socratis*, was alive and active in 379. That the majority of Plato's personages are characters already dead when his dialogues were written, seems to me a mere consequence of the fact that the dialogues deal with Socrates and his contemporaries.

[It might be urged against the reasoning of the first paragraph of p. 20 *supra* that several, if not all, of the dialogues of Aeschines (certainly the *Aspasia*, *Alcibiades*, *Callias*, *Axiochus*) were of the " narrated " type. But they were narrations of the simplest kind of which the *Charmides* and *Laches* are examples, and such evidence as we have suggests that they are all later in date of composition than the earliest work of Plato.]

CHAPTER III

MINOR SOCRATIC DIALOGUES: *HIPPIAS MAJOR, HIPPIAS MINOR, ION, MENEXENUS*

LOVERS of great literature have every reason to be whole-heartedly thankful that once in the world's history a supreme philosophical thinker should also have been a superb dramatic artist. But what is to them pure gain is, in some ways, gain at the expense of the average student of "metaphysics." For several reasons it is quite impossible to construct a neatly arranged systematic handbook to the "Platonic philosophy." In the first place, it is doubtful whether there ever was a "Platonic philosophy" at all, in the sense of a definite set of formulated doctrines about the *omne scibile*. Plato has done his best to make it quite clear that he took no great interest in "system-making." To him philosophy meant no compact body of "results" to be learned, but a life spent in the active personal pursuit of truth and goodness by the light of one or two great passionate convictions. It is not likely that, even at the end of his life of eighty years, he fancied himself to have worked out anything like a coherent, clearly articulated "theory of everything." Systematization of this kind commonly has to be paid for by intellectual stagnation; the vitality and progressiveness of Platonism is probably largely owing to the fact that, even in the mind of its originator, it always remained largely tentative and provisional. If there ever was a Platonic "system," at least Plato himself resolutely refused to write an exposition of it,[1] and we of later times, who do not possess any record of the oral teaching which was clearly intended to be the vehicle of Plato's most personal and intimate thinking, are not in a position to make the lack good. The dialogues will tell us something of Plato's fundamental life-

[1] *Ep.* vii. 341*c*: "There does not exist, and there never shall, any treatise by myself on these matters. The subject does not admit, as the sciences in general do, of exposition. It is only after long association in the great business itself and a shared life that a light breaks out in the soul, kindled, so to say, by a leaping flame, and thereafter feeds itself." *Ep.* ii. 314*c*: "I have never myself written a word on these topics, and there neither is nor ever shall be any treatise by Plato; what now bears the name belongs to Socrates beautified and rejuvenated." That is, all that a teacher can do in philosophy is to awaken in a younger mind the spirit of independent personal thinking; the dialogues are meant not to expound a "Platonic system," but to preserve the memory of Socrates. One of Plato's grounds for dissatisfaction with Dionysius II was that he had circulated a work professing to expound "Platonism" (*Ep.* vii. 341*b*).

long convictions; of his "system," if he had one, they hardly tell us anything at all. With Aristotle we are in a very different position. We have lost the "works" in which he recommended his "views" to the world at large, and possess the manuscripts of courses of lectures in which we see him, for the most part, feeling his way to his results through the criticism of others.

Further special difficulties are created for us by certain peculiarities of Plato's literary temperament. Unlike Aristotle, he does not introduce himself and his opinions into his dialogues. He is, in fact, at great pains, with the instinct of the great dramatist, to keep his own personality completely in the background. Socrates is present as one of the speakers in all the dialogues except the *Laws*, and in all except those which we have seen reason to regard as written in late life, Socrates is not only the chief speaker but dominates the whole dialogue by his vivid and strongly marked personality. It can hardly be doubted that in the long list of works written before Plato had found his real vocation as head of the Academy, the main conscious object of the writer is to preserve a faithful and living portrait of the older philosopher.

Even if we accept the view originated about the beginning of the nineteenth century, that Plato has transfigured the personality and teaching of Socrates out of recognition, we are bound, I think, to hold that the transfiguration has been unconscious. We cannot seriously ascribe to Plato deliberate and pointless mystification. This means, of itself, that Plato carefully devotes himself to reproducing the life and thought of a generation to which he did not himself belong, and that whatever indications he may have given us of his personal doctrines have to be given under restrictions imposed by this selection of a vanished age as the background of the dialogues. (Thus we cannot read the *Republic* intelligently unless we bear carefully in mind both that the whole work presupposes as its setting the Athens of the Archidamian war and that this setting had vanished into the past by 413, when Plato was still no more than a boy. So to understand the *Protagoras* we have to remember that we are dealing with a still earlier time, Athens under Pericles shortly before the outbreak of the great war, and that Plato was not even born at the date of the gathering of the "wits" in the house of Callias.) There are only two characters among the host of personages in Plato's dialogues of whom one can be certain that they are not actual historical figures of the fifth century, the unnamed Eleatic of the *Sophistes* and *Politicus* and the unnamed Athenian of the *Laws*. They have been left anonymous apparently on purpose that their creator may be at liberty to express thoughts of his own through them with a freedom impossible in the case of figures who are "kennt men," with characters and views of their own which have to be taken into account.

This is generally admitted on all hands except for the one most important figure of all, that of Socrates. Him, it is still maintained in many quarters, though not so confidently as it used to be main-

tained thirty or forty years ago, Plato treated without scruple, to the point of putting into his mouth all sorts of theories invented by Plato himself after the death of their ostensible exponent. I cannot myself believe in this extraordinary exception to the general rule, but even if one does believe in it, the general situation is not very seriously affected. Even those who most freely credit Plato with fathering his own views on Socrates commonly admit that some of the views ascribed to Socrates in the dialogues (if only those expressed in the *Apology*) are those of the actual Socrates, and to admit this means admitting at least that we have somehow to distinguish between those utterances of " Socrates " which are really deliverances of " Plato " and those which are not, and it becomes a difficult problem to know on what principle the distinction is to be made. Finally, there is a further difficulty arising from the very life-likeness of the dialogues of the earlier groups. In nearly all of them except the shortest, the conversation wanders, as actual talk does, over a wide field of topics. Metaphysics, ethics, the principles of government, of economics, of art-criticism, of education, may all come under consideration in one and the same conversation. If we try to isolate the topics, putting together under one head all Plato has to say anywhere about economics, under another all his utterances about religion, under a third his views on beauty and the arts, we run the very serious risk of confusing what may be views learned early in life, and very largely taken over receptively from a predecessor, with the very ripest fruits of a life of intense personal thought. (Thus it would be rash to confound in one amalgam utterances about early education taken from the *Republic*, written probably before Plato was forty and at any rate *possibly* more Socratic than Platonic, with others taken from the *Laws*, the *magnum opus* of Plato's old age, where there is no Socrates in question to cause any difficulty.) A work on Platonic philosophy composed on these principles may be an admirably digested " cram-book " ; it is certain to obliterate every trace of the development of Plato's thought. For all these reasons, it seems the better choice between evils, to deal with the different dialogues *seriatim*, even at the cost of some repetition.

Accordingly I propose first to consider what we may call the " Socratic " group among the dialogues, the series of works culminating, so far as ripeness of thought and compass of subjects are concerned, in the *Republic*, grouping the slighter dialogues together but dwelling more fully on the detail of the greater and richer. Next I propose to treat separately each of the great dialogues of Plato's later age in the same way. In both cases I must remind my reader that I do not believe that many results of anything like certainty can be reached in the determination of the precise order of composition of particular dialogues. In the case of the earlier group, which I call Socratic in the sense that they are dominated by the personality of Plato's Socrates, I make no assumption about this order beyond the general one that the four great dialogues which

have the widest range of subject-matter and are also reported at second-hand are maturer work than the slighter dialogues which have the form of direct conversation, and presumably also than shorter "indirect" conversations like the *Charmides* and *Euthydemus*. Beyond this, the order in which I shall examine the dialogues has no merit except that of convenience. Similarly the arrangement I shall adopt for the dialogues of later life is not meant to carry any silent chronological implications.

With one or two trifling exceptions most of the dialogues we shall have first to review have an ethical purport. (Perhaps the only complete exception of any importance is afforded by the *Cratylus*.) The interest of many of them is by no means exclusively ethical, sometimes (as in the case of the *Euthydemus*) not ostensibly primarily ethical, but we commonly find that the discussion either begins with, or is found as it proceeds to involve, the great practical issue of the right direction of conduct. It is therefore advisable to begin at the outset by formulating very briefly and in a way which brings out their interconnexion, a few simple principles which we shall find running through the whole of Plato's treatment of the moral being of man. Since we find these principles taken for granted in what has every mark of being Plato's earliest work as well as in his ripest and latest, we may fairly regard them as a legacy from Socrates; and the most characteristic of them are, in fact, specifically attributed to Socrates by Aristotle, though we have no reason to suppose that Aristotle had any reason for the attribution beyond the fact that the principles in question are put into the mouth of Socrates in the Platonic dialogues, notably in the *Protagoras*. The most bald and straightforward statement of these principles as a whole in the Platonic *corpus* is perhaps that of the *Alcibiades I*, which has every appearance of being intended as a compendium of ethics composed by an immediate disciple and possibly during Plato's lifetime. We may reproduce the main line of argument adopted there and elsewhere much as follows.

The one great standing aim of men in all they do is to attain happiness (*eudaimonia*), in other words to make a success, in the best sense of the word, of life. Every one wants to make a success of his private life; if a man is conscious of abilities and opportunities which open the way to prominence as a public man, he is anxious to make a success of the affairs of his "city," to be a successful statesman. This is what we mean by being a *good* man; the *good* man is the man who "conducts his own affairs, those of his household, those of the city, *well*." And the words *good* and *well* are not used here in a narrowly moralistic sense. To conduct your business well means to make a thorough success of it; the good man is the thoroughly effective man. But to make a thorough success of life means to achieve and possess *good*. We may say then that all men alike desire *good* and nothing but good. A man may conceivably prefer the appearance or reputation of some things to their reality; *e.g.* a man may prefer a reputation for a virtue he does not possess to

the possession of the virtue, or he might prefer being thought handsome or witty to being really so. But no one ever prefers being thought to enjoy good to the actual enjoyment of good. Where good is concerned, every one wishes really to have it, and not to put up with a counterfeit. If a man chooses, as many men do, what is not really good, the reason must be that he wrongly supposes it to be good. No one would ever knowingly choose evil when he might choose good, or leave a good he might have had unchosen. This is the meaning of the famous " Socratic " paradox that " all wrongdoing is involuntary." It is involuntary in the sense that the man who chooses what is bad only chooses it because he wrongly thinks it good. And so with the other " paradox " that no one ever knows the good without acting on his knowledge. It cannot be true that men " know the good but do the bad " ; that would imply choice of an evil known to be evil, and such a choice is impossible.

Now when we come to consider the different things which men commonly call " good " and wish to have, we see at once that they are of various kinds. Some of them are material possessions. Many men think that good means just plenty of things of this sort. But we can easily see that material things are not good except for a man who knows how to use them. It would be no good to a man, for example, to have flutes, or musical instruments of any kind, unless he knew how to use them. Flutes are good—for the man who knows how to play on them. Similarly it would be no real good to you to possess all the gold in the world, unless you know how to *use* it. Again, men think that bodily beauty, strength and agility, robust health, are very good things. But health and strength again may be misused ; they are good only for the man who knows how to make the proper use of them. If a man has not this knowledge, but " abuses " his physical advantages, it might be much better for him if he had been less robust and active. The same thing is true of intellectual " parts." A man is not really the better for parts and accomplishments which he does not know how to use rightly. In fact we may say that if health, wealth, and the recognized " good " things are to be really good, it is first of all necessary that the user of these things should be good. Now that which uses all other things, even a man's body, is his *soul*. The soul *is* the man, and everything else that is his is merely something he has or owns. A man, in fact, is a " soul *using* a body " (this is the standing Academic definition of " man ").[1] Hence the first condition of enjoying real good and making a real success of life is that a man's soul should be in a good or healthy state. And the good or healthy state of the soul is just the wisdom or knowledge (*sophia, phronesis*) which ensures that a man shall make the right use of his body and of everything else which is his. Hence the first duty of every man who means to enjoy good or happiness is to " tend his soul," " to

[1] For this reasoning see *Alc. I* 119*a*–133*d*, *Euthydemus*, 278*e*–282*d*, 288*d*–292*e*. For the soul as the real " man " which " uses " the body see *Alc. I* 130*c*.

see to it that his soul is as good as it possibly can be," that is, to get the knowledge or insight which ensures his using everything rightly. And before a man can develop this quality of soul, he must be brought to "know himself," that is, to recognize the imperative need of moral wisdom and the dreadfulness of his present state of ignorance.[1] This is why Socrates taught that "all the virtues are one thing," wisdom or moral insight, and why he insisted that the necessary preparation for the private man or the statesman who means to make life a success is the "tendance of his own soul," and the first step towards this "tendance" is true self-knowledge. The same considerations explain the peculiar character of the mission Socrates believes himself to have received from heaven. He does not claim, like the professional teacher of an "art" such as medicine or music, to have ready-made knowledge to impart to anyone, and hence he denies that he has ever had "disciples." For he does not profess to have attained the wisdom or insight of which he speaks, but only to have attained to the perception that it is the one thing needful for the conduct of life. He claims only that he makes it the business of his life to "tend his own soul" and exhorts all his fellow-citizens, high and low, old and young, to do the same, and that he has a certain power of bringing home to others by his questions the grossness and danger of their ignorance of themselves. His function is simply to impress on all and sundry the misery of the state of ignorance in which they find themselves "by nature" and the importance of "coming out of it." How a man is to come out of this state of nature is not explained anywhere,[2] but in proportion as he does come out of it and advance to true insight, true knowledge of moral good and evil, all the different "virtues" or excellences of character and conduct will automatically ensue from this knowledge.

These fundamental elementary notions will suffice to explain the general character of most of the earliest "Socratic" dialogues. The procedure adopted is commonly this. Some term of moral import for the conduct of life, one of those words which everybody is using as familiar expressions daily without much consideration of their precise meaning, such as "courage," "self-mastery," or even "virtue" itself, is taken and we ask the question whether we can say exactly what it means. A number of answers are suggested and examined, but all are found wanting. None of them will stand careful scrutiny. Usually the result arrived at is a negative one. We discover to our shame that we do not really know the meaning of the most familiar epithets which we use every day of our lives to convey moral approval or censure. This revelation of our own ignorance is painful, but it has the advantage that we have taken a

[1] This is the message with which Socrates regarded himself as charged by God to his fellow-citizens and mankind in general (*Apol.* 29*d–e*, 36*c*, 41*c*).

[2] Naturally not. An answer to this question would raise the issues covered in Christian theology by the doctrine of "grace." We must not look for an anticipation of Augustine in Hellenic moral philosophy.

step forward. At any rate, our knowledge of our own ignorance will henceforth prevent our fancying that we really knew when we were repeating some of the formulae which our inquiry has condemned. Now that we know that we do not know what it is so necessary for the conduct of life to know, we are at least left with a heightened sense of the importance of " tendance of the soul " ; we shall not, like the rest of mankind, suppose ourselves to be in spiritual health when we are really inwardly diseased ; our very knowledge of the gravity of our spiritual malady will make us all the more unremitting in our determination to make the attempt to escape from our ignorance the great business of life. This, rather than anything more specific in the way of " positive results," is the conclusion Plato means us to draw from these " dialogues of search." It has been objected to Plato by unsympathetic critics, as he makes some of his characters object it to Socrates, that such a conclusion is not satisfactory. Socrates, Grote thinks, should have exchanged the easier part of critic for that of defender of theses of his own. He would have found that they could be subjected to a dialectic like his own with effects as damaging as those produced on his rivals' theories by himself. The objection misses the mark. Plato's object is not to propound theorems in moral science for our instruction, but to rouse us to give our own personal care to the conduct of our moral life by convincing us of the ignorance we usually disguise from ourselves by acquiescence in uncriticized half-truths and the practical gravity of that ignorance. He wishes to make us think to the purpose about the great concern of life, not to do our thinking for us. From his point of view, complacent satisfaction with false conceptions of good is the deadliest of all maladies of the soul ; if he can make us honestly dissatisfied with our customary loose thinking, he has produced exactly the effect he designed.

We may now, bearing these few simple ideas in mind, consider the arguments of some of the early dialogues.

The Greater Hippias.—The form of the dialogue is the simplest possible ; it is a direct colloquy between Socrates and a single speaker, the well-known polymath Hippias of Elis, who figures also in the *Lesser Hippias*, the *Protagoras*, and a conversation, perhaps suggested by the opening remarks of our dialogue, in the fourth book of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.[1] The presence of Hippias at Athens implies that the time is one of peace, and, as the first visit of Gorgias to the city is referred to as a past event (282*b*), the supposed date must be after 427 B.C., and therefore during the years of the peace of Nicias. Hippias is depicted as childishly conceited on the strength of the great variety of topics he is able to expound, and the brilliant financial success which attends him wherever he goes. Even at Sparta—a city where he is often called on matters of state—though no interest is taken in his astronomy and mathematics, he has made a resounding success with a more immediately practical

[1] Xenophon, *Memor.* iv. 4.

subject, a set homily put into the mouth of Nestor on "the kind of fine achievements by which a young man may win high reputation" (286*b*). This remark leads on to the main subject of the dialogue, the question what is really meant by the word καλόν, beautiful, which was commonly employed, like its Latin equivalent *honestum*, and our colloquial "fine," to express both physical and moral beauty. Socrates professes to have much trouble in satisfying the question of a certain combative and ill-mannered acquaintance who has reproached him for constantly using the epithets καλόν and αἰσχρόν, "fine" and "ugly," in judgments of value without being able to explain their exact meaning. Can Hippias help him out of his perplexity? (It does not call for much perspicacity to see that the imaginary "rude fellow" who insists on asking awkward questions is no other than Socrates himself.[1]) The precise problem is this. We call an act of remarkable courage a "fine" act, and we say the same thing about an act of outstanding and remarkable justice. The use of the same word "fine" in both cases implies that there is a something (a certain εἶδος, form, or character—the word is little more than a synonym for a "something") common to both cases, or why do we give them the same name, "fine"? What is "the fine itself," "the just fine" (αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν), *i.e.* what is it which is exactly and precisely named when we use the word "fine"?[2] Hippias, like many interlocutors in Plato, underrates the difficulty of the problem because he confuses the *meaning* of a term with an *example* of it. He answers that a "fine girl" is, of course, something "fine" (287*e*). But this clearly tells us nothing about the *meaning* of "fine." There are also "fine" horses, "fine" musical instruments, even "fine" pots and pans, like those made by the masters of Attic pottery (288*d*), and, after all, the beauty of the "fine girl" is relative. She would not be "fine" by comparison with a goddess (289*b*). What then is "the just fine," the character which all "fine" things exhibit? (289*d*). Here again Hippias makes an elementary blunder. Anything, he says, is made "fine," if it is gilded, and so "that which by its presence makes a thing fine" may be said to be just *gold* (289*e*).

But then the objection occurs that Phidias notoriously did not gild the features of his famous chryselephantine Athena, and surely Phidias may be presumed to have known his own business as an artist (290*b*). This leads, at last, to a real attempt to *define* "the fine." The "fine" is "the becoming" or "fitting" or "appropriate" (τὸ πρέπον, 290*c*). It would follow from this at once that a soup-spoon of wood, because more "fitting," is more beautiful or "fine" than a golden spoon (291*c*). Note that Socrates does not

[1] See 288*d*, where Socrates humorously describes his pertinacious questioner as "no wit, one of the *canaille* who cares nothing for anything but the truth," and 298*b* 11, where he as good as identifies him with "the son of Sophroniscus."

[2] The characteristic phrases αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν and εἶδος are introduced at 289*d* without explanation, as something quite familiar. They bear the same

positively assert this conclusion, as he is represented as doing by interpreters who are determined to see nothing in him but a commonplace utilitarian. He obviously intends to raise a difficulty. It seemed a satisfactory explanation of the procedure of Phidias to say that a statue with a gilded face would not be " beautiful " because the gilding would not be " befitting." Yet, though a common wooden spoon would be more " in place " where one is eating soup than a golden one, it is a *paradox* to say that because the wooden spoon is " in place," it is a thing of beauty. Whatever may be the true answer to the question what " beauty " is, the identification of the aesthetically " fine " with the " befitting " is far too crude a solution.

Hippias evidently feels the difficulty, and is made to fall back again on an illustration, this time from the moral sphere. It is eminently " fine " to live in health, wealth, and honours, to bury your parents splendidly, and to receive in the fullness of days a splendid funeral from your descendants (291*d*). But this, again, is manifestly no true definition. A definition must be rigidly universal. But every one will admit that Heracles and Achilles and others who preferred a short and glorious to a long and inglorious life, and so died young and left their parents to survive them, made a " fine " choice (292*e*–293*c*). The illustration has thus led nowhere, and we have still to discuss the definition of the " fine " as the " fitting " or " becoming " on its own merits. When a thing has the character of being " becoming," does this make it " fine," or does it only make the thing *seem* " fine " ? Hippias prefers the second alternative, since even a scarecrow of a man can be made to look " finer " if he is " becomingly " dressed. But, obviously, if " propriety " makes things seem finer than they really are, " the appropriate " and the " fine " cannot be the same thing (294*b*). And we cannot get out of the difficulty, as Hippias would like to do, by saying the " appropriateness " *both* makes things " fine " and makes them seem " fine." If that were so, what really *is* " fine " would always *seem* fine too. Yet it is notorious that communities and individuals differ about nothing more than about the question what sort of conduct is " fine " (294*c*–*d*). Thus if " appropriateness " actually makes things " fine," the proposed definition may possibly be the right one ; but if it only makes them " seem " fine— (we have seen that the alternatives are exclusive of one another)— the definition must clearly be rejected. And Hippias is satisfied that this second alternative is the true one (294*e*). (Hume's well-known ethical theory affords a good illustration of the point of this reasoning. Hume sets himself to show that every society thinks the kind of conduct it " disinterestedly " likes virtuous and the

meaning which they have in dialogues where the so-called " ideal theory " is expounded. They mean that which is denoted without excess or defect by a significant name, a determinate character. This is a good illustration of the way in which the " ideal theory " is directly suggested by the everyday use of language. It is assumed that if several things can each be significantly called *x*, then *x* has a determinate significance which is the same in all the cases.

conduct it "disinterestedly" dislikes vicious. He then assumes that he has proved that these two kinds of conduct really *are* virtuous and vicious respectively, and that because a society knows certainly what it likes and what it dislikes, it is infallible in its judgments about virtue and vice. There is manifestly no connexion between the premises of this reasoning and its conclusion.) Socrates now (295*c*) throws out a suggestion of his own for examination. Perhaps it may be that the "fine" is the same as the "useful." At any rate, by "fine eyes" we seem to mean eyes which do their work of seeing well, by a "fine" or "handsome" body one which discharges its various functions well, and the same considerations seem to hold good of "fine" horses, ships, implements of all kinds, and "fine" social institutions. In all these cases we seem to call "fine" that which serves the use to which it is to be put well, and "ugly" that which serves that use badly. The examples, drawn from a wide range of facts, thus suggest an obvious generalization, and the use of them to suggest it is an illustration of what Aristotle had in mind when he specified "inductive arguments" as one of the contributions of Socrates to philosophical method.[1]

If the definition once given were magisterially proposed for our acceptance, Socrates would thus stand revealed as a pure utilitarian in moral and aesthetic theory. But it is, in fact, put forward tentatively as a suggestion for examination. The examination is conducted in strict accord with the requirements of the dialectical method as described in the *Phaedo*.[2] The first step is to see what consequences follow from the suggested "postulate" (ὑπόθεσις). If the consequences are found to be in accord with known facts, and thus so far "verified," the postulate will be regarded as *so far* justified; if some of them prove to be at variance with fact, it must be modified or dismissed, it cannot hold the field as it stands.

What consequences follow, then, from the identification of the "fine" with the "useful"? There is one at least which must give us pause. A thing is useful for what it *can* do, not for what it cannot; thus our formula apparently leads to the identification of τὸ καλόν with *power* to produce some result. But results may be good or they may be bad, and it seems monstrous to hold that power to produce evil is "fine." We must, at the least, modify our statement by saying that the "fine" is that which can produce *good, i.e.*, whether the "useful" is "fine" or not will depend on the goodness or badness of the end to which it is instrumental. Now we call that which is instrumental to good "profitable" (ὠφελιμόν); thus our proposed definition must be made more specific by a further determination. We must say "the fine"

[1] Aristot. *Met.* M1078*b* 27. Note that neither Socrates nor Aristotle regards the "induction" as a proof. The generalization τὸ καλόν=τὸ χρησιμόν has yet to be tested and may have to be rejected. The testing is the work of intellectual analysis, or, as Socrates and Plato call it "dialectic."

[2] *Phaedo*, 100*a–b*, 101*d*.

is that which is profitable (instrumental to the production of good) (296*e*).

Even so, we have a worse difficulty to face. We are saying in effect that the " fine " = that which causes good as its result. But a cause and its effect are always different (or, in modern language, causality is always transitive). Hence, if the " fine " is the *cause* of good, it must follow that what is " fine " is never itself good, and what is good is never itself " fine," and this is a monstrous paradox (297*a*). It seems then that the attempt to give a utilitarian definition of τὸ καλόν must be abandoned.

Possibly we may succeed better with a hedonist theory of beauty. The pictures, statues, and the like which we call " fine " all give us pleasure, and so do music and literature. In the one case the pleasure is got from sight, in the other from hearing. This suggests the new theory that the " fine " is " that which it is pleasant to see or hear " (298*a*). And we may even get in " moral beauty " under the formula, for " fine conduct " and " fine laws " are things which it gives us pleasure to see or to hear. But there is a logical difficulty to face. We are trying to define the " fine " as " that which it is pleasant to see *and* hear." But, of course, you do not hear the things which it is pleasant to see, nor see the things which it is pleasant to hear. Thus our proposed definition will not be true of either of the classes of things which are " fine," and, being true of neither, it cannot be true of both. We assumed that τὸ καλόν, whatever it may be, must be a character common to all ' fine " things, but " to be seen and heard " is not a character either of the " pleasures of sight " or of the " pleasures of hearing " (300*a*, *b*).

Aristotle comments on the fallacy, formally committed in this argument, of confusing " and " with " or," but the real trouble lies deeper. When the reasoning has been made formally sound by substituting " or " everywhere for " and," it still remains the fact that it is hard to say that the " pleasures of sight " and those of hearing have anything in common but their common character of being pleasant, and it has been the standing assumption of the dialogue that all " fine " things *have* some one common character. But the conclusion, which might seem indicated, that the " fineness " which all " fine " things have in common is just " pleasantness " is excluded by the firm conviction of both Plato and Aristotle that there are " disgraceful," morally " ugly " pleasures, *e.g.* those of the sexual " pervert." At the same time, the proposed formula is at any rate suggestive. There must be some reason why the two unmistakably " aesthetic " senses should be just sight and hearing, though the utilization of the fact demands a much more developed aesthetic psychology than that of our dialogue. The equivocation between " and " and " or " is, on Socrates' part, a conscious trap laid for his antagonist, as he shows when he goes on to remark that, after all, it is possible for " both " to have a character which belongs to neither singly, since, *e.g.*, Socrates and Hippias are a couple, though Socrates is not a couple, nor is Hippias. Thus it would be logically

possible that " the pleasures of sight and hearing " might collectively have some character which belongs to neither class separately ; but the possibility is nothing to *our* purpose. For we agreed that the " fine " is a character which makes all " fine " things " fine," and obviously a character which " fine sights " do not possess, (though the collection " fine sights *and* sounds " may possess it,) cannot be what makes " fine " sights fine (303*d*). If we look for some common character which distinguishes both pleasures of sight and pleasures of hearing from other pleasures, and so justifies our calling them in particular the " fine " pleasures, the only obvious character is that both are " harmless " and therefore better than other pleasures, (indulgence in which may easily harm our health or character or repute). But this brings us back to our old formula that the " fine " is the " profitable " with the added specification that it is " profitable pleasure " (303*e*). And thus we are faced once more with the difficulty that the " fine " is made productive of good, or a cause of good, with the consequence that the " fine " is not itself good nor the good itself " fine " (304*a*). Thus the result of the whole discussion is negative. We have only learned that though we are always talking about " fine conduct," as though we knew our own meaning, we are really in a state of mental fog of which we ought to be ashamed. We have discovered our own ignorance of what it is most imperative we should know and what we fancy ourselves to know exceptionally well.

It is in this salutary lesson and not in any of the proposed definitions of the " fine " that we must look for the real significance of the dialogue. But it is also suggestive in other ways. The lesson it gives in the right method of framing and testing a definition is more important than any of the tentative definitions examined. Yet it is a valuable hint towards a more developed aesthetic theory that sensible " beauty " is found to be confined to the perceptions of the two senses of sight and hearing, and the illustration of the golden and wooden spoons might well serve as a warning against the dangers of an unduly " rationalistic " aesthetic theory. A wooden porridge-spoon is not necessarily a thing of beauty because it may be admirably " adapted " for the purposes of the porridge-eater. It is a still more important contribution to sound ethics to have insisted on the impossibility of reducing moral excellence (the " fine " in action) to mere " efficiency," irrespective of the moral quality of the results of the " efficient " agent.[1] And the emphatic insistence on the " transitive " character of all causality—a view which pervades all the best Greek metaphysics from first to last—may be regarded as the opening of a discussion which has continued to our own time and has issues of the most momentous kind for the whole interpretation of existence.[2]

[1] Mr. Chesterton remarks somewhere that Fagin was probably an exceptionally " efficient " educator of boys ; the trouble was that he was efficient in teaching them the wrong things.

[2] *E.g.* the cause of Theism is bound up with the position that all genuine causality is " transitive," and that purely " immanent " causality is not caus-

The Lesser Hippias.—This short dialogue, though less ambitious in its scope, is much more brilliantly executed than the *Hippias Major*. Its authenticity is sufficiently established by the fact that Aristotle, though not mentioning the author, quotes the dialogue by name as "the Hippias"; such explicit references never occur in his work to writings of any "Socratic men" other than Plato.[1] The conversation discusses a single ethical paradox, and its real purport only emerges in the closing words of Socrates.

Socrates opens the talk by quoting an opinion that the *Iliad* is a finer poem than the *Odyssey*, as the hero of the former, Achilles, is a morally nobler character than Odysseus, the hero of the latter. The moralistic tone of this criticism is characteristically Athenian, as we can see for ourselves from a reading of the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, but does not concern us further. The remark is a mere peg on which to hang a discussion of the purely ethical problem in which Socrates is really interested. The transition is effected by the declaration of Hippias that Achilles was certainly a nobler character than Odysseus, since Achilles is single-minded, sincere, and truthful, but Odysseus notoriously *rusé* and a past master of deceit. We see this from the famous lines in the ninth book of the *Iliad*, where Achilles pointedly tells the "artful" Odysseus that he hates the man who says one thing and means another "worse than the gates of Hades" (365*a*). Socrates replies that, after all, Achilles was no more "truthful" than Odysseus, as the context of this very passage proves. He *said* he would at once desert the expedition, but, in fact, he did nothing of the kind, and, what is more, he actually told his friend Aias a different story. To him he said not that he would sail home, but that he would keep out of the fighting until the Trojans should drive the Achaeans back to their ships (371*b*). (This is meant to negative the suggestion of Hippias that Achilles honestly meant what he said when he threatened to desert, but changed his mind afterwards because of the unexpected straits to which his comrades-in-arms were reduced.) It looks then as though Homer, unlike Hippias, thought that the "truthful man" and the "liar" are not two, but one and the same.

This is the paradox which Socrates proceeds to defend, and Hippias, in the name of common sense, to deny. Or rather it is the application of a still more general paradox that the man who "misses the mark" (ἁμαρτάνει) on purpose (ἑκών) is "better" than the man who does so "unintentionally" (ἄκων). Popular morality rejects

ality at all. This becomes specially obvious from a study of the famous Aristotelian argument for the "unmoved Mover."

[1] It is barely credible that Aristotle should not have read the admired "Socratic discourses" of Aeschines of Sphettus or the *Alcibiades* of Antisthenes, and it is therefore significant that he never mentions any of these works. We may take it that a named dialogue introducing Socrates *always* means to him a dialogue of Plato, or one regarded by the contemporary Academy as Plato's. And I cannot believe that the Academy itself can have been liable to error about the Platonic authorship of dialogues within a quarter of a century of Plato's death.

a view of this kind as monstrous. It holds that we ought, as Hippias says, to show συγγνώμη (to "make allowances") for involuntary wrong-doing, but that for deliberate wrong-doing there is no excuse. The main interest of the dialogue lies in the line of argument by which Socrates impugns this generally accepted thesis. He proceeds, as usual, by an "inductive" argument, *i.e.* an appeal to analogy. In general, the man who knows most about a subject is of all men the one who can mislead you in his own subject if he chooses to do so. An able mathematician, like Hippias, would be much better able to impose a false demonstration on others than a non-mathematician, who would only commit fallacies unintentionally and incidentally, and thus be led into visible self-contradictions. And the same thing holds good for astronomy (366*d*–368*a*). The same thing is true about arts involving manual dexterity (368*b*–369*b*). The man who only fails when he means to fail is a much better craftsman than the man who fails unintentionally from incompetence. It is true also of all forms of bodily dexterity. The runner who falls behind only when he means to do so, the wrestler who is thrown when he means to let himself be thrown, is a better runner or wrestler than the man who falls behind his competitor or is thrown against his will, because he "can't help it" (373*c*–374*b*). So with physical "talents." The man who only makes a false note when he means to do so is a better singer than the man who can't help singing out of tune. And in the world of industry, a tool with which you can make a bad stroke when you mean to do so, is a better tool than one with which you can't help making false strokes. And to come to living "implements," a horse or a dog which does its work badly only when the owner means that it shall, has a "better soul" than one which does the wrong thing when the owner means it to do the right one (374*c*–375*c*). The same thing would be true of a servant. (Bob Sawyer's boy, who took the medicines to the wrong houses because he was ordered to do so, was much more efficient than the sort of boy who blunders about errands because he is too stupid to do what he is told.) We may argue by analogy that our own souls are better if they "go wrong" on purpose than if they do so unintentionally (375*d*). In fact, we may condense the principle of the argument thus. Righteousness or morality (δικαιοσύνη) is either "power" (δύναμις), or "knowledge" (ἐπιστήμη), or both. But the man who *can* do right is better in respect of "power," a more "able" man than the man who cannot; and the man who knows how to do it has more knowledge than the man who does not. And we have seen that it takes more ability and more knowledge to "go wrong" when you mean to do so, than to blunder unintentionally. And the better man is the man who has the better soul. Hence it seems to follow that "the man who does wrong on purpose, if there is such a person, is a better man than the man who does wrong unintentionally" (375*d*–376*b*). Yet this is such a paradox that Socrates hesitates to assert it, though he does not see how to escape it.

What is the real point of this curious argument? It is clear, of course, that the main assumption on which it is based is the famous Socratic thesis that "virtue is knowledge," and again, that the method by which the conclusion is reached is the appeal to the analogy of the arts and crafts so constantly employed by Socrates. It is clear also that Plato does not mean us to accept the alleged inference; he does not seriously think that the deliberate "villain" is morally better than the man who does wrong, in an hour of temptation, against his settled purpose in life; it is the impossibility of such a doctrine which leads Socrates to say that he cannot commit himself consistently to the conclusion. Yet we cannot take the dialogue as intended to expose and refute either the doctrine that virtue is knowledge, or the use of the analogy from the "arts" as valuable in ethical reasoning. That a man who knows "the good" will, of course, aim at it is a standing doctrine of all Greek ethics; to suppose that Plato means either to deny this or to reject reasoning from the "arts," would be to treat nearly the whole of the *Republic*, to name no other Platonic dialogues, as a prolonged bad joke. We must therefore find some other method of interpretation.

On reflection we see that the key to Plato's meaning is really supplied by one clause in the proposition which emerges as the conclusion of the matter: "the man who does wrong on purpose, *if there is such a person*, is the good man." The insinuation plainly is that there really is no such person as "the man who does wrong on purpose," and that the paradox does not arise simply because there is no such person. In other words, we have to understand the Socratic doctrine that virtue is knowledge, and the Socratic use of the analogy of the "arts," in the light of the other well-known Socratic dictum, repeated by Plato on his own account in the *Laws*, that "all wrong-doing is involuntary." It is this, and not the formulated inference that the man who does wrong on purpose is the good man, which is the real conclusion to which Plato is conducting us. And we need have no difficulty about admitting this conclusion, if we bear in mind the true and sensible remark of Proclus about the Platonic sense of the word "voluntary" (ἑκούσιον). In Plato, the voluntary, as Proclus says,[1] means regularly what we really wish to have. Now no man wishes to have what he knows or believes to be bad for him. Many men wish for what, in fact, would be bad for them, but they can only do so because they falsely think the thing in question good. To wish to have a thing *because* you know it would be bad for you would be impossible. As Aristotle puts it, "every one wishes for what *he* thinks good." Many men choose evil in spite of the fact that it is evil, no one chooses it *because* it is evil and he knows it to be so. (Of course he may know or believe that he will be sent to prison or to hell for choosing as he does, but at heart he thinks that it will be "worth his while" to take these consequences, he will be "better off" even after paying this price

[1] Proclus, *in Remp.* ii. 355 (Kroll).

for what he desires.[1]) Thus the proposition "all wrong-doing is involuntary," has nothing to do with the question of human freedom; it is merely the negative way of stating that a man who really knows what his highest good is, will always act on this knowledge. The man who really knows the good but chooses something else is as much of a nonentity as a round square, and it is just because "there is no such person" that the wildest paradoxes can be asserted about him.

It follows that knowledge of the good is, in one respect, different from every other kind of knowledge, and this difference affects the employment of the analogy from professional and technical knowledge, the sort of thing the "sophists" meant by "knowledge." It is the only knowledge which *cannot* be put to a wrong use; every other kind of knowledge can be abused, and is abused when it is put to a bad use, as, *e.g.*, when the medical man employs his special professional knowledge to produce disease or death, instead of curing the one or preventing the other. There is a real analogy between "goodness" and the "arts"; false beliefs about what is good or bad will ruin the conduct of life, as surely as false beliefs about what is wholesome will ruin a man's practical success as a medical man; but if you press the analogy to the point of arguing that a man can use his knowledge of good for the deliberate doing of evil, as he might use his knowledge of medicine to commit a clever murder, you will be led astray, a truth with which Socrates is made to show himself familiar in Book I. of the *Republic*, when he urges this very point against Polemarchus; that the analogy has its limits does not prevent it from being a sound analogy within those limits; that it becomes unsound when you forget them is no reason for denying that virtue really is knowledge, though it is not, like the "goodness" taught by the sophists, mere technical knowledge how to produce certain results, if you happen to wish for them.

Ion.—Little need be said about this slight dialogue on the nature of "poetic inspiration." The main ideas suggested are expounded much more fully in those important Platonic works with which we shall have to deal later. We may, however, make a few remarks about the current conceptions of poetry against which Socrates is made to protest. It is important to remember that the whole conception of "inspiration," so familiar to ourselves, is foreign to the way of thinking of poetry characteristic of the age of Pericles and Socrates. Poets were habitually reckoned, along with physicians, engineers, engravers, and others, as σοφοί, "wits" or "clever men." This means that what was thought distinctive of the poet was not what we call "native genius," but "craftsmanship," "workmanship," "technique." He was conceived as consciously producing a beautiful result by the deft fitting together of words and musical sounds, exactly as the architect does the same thing by the deft putting together of stones. Of all the great Greek poets Pindar is

[1] Cf. "To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n."

the only one who pointedly insists on the superiority of φυά, " native genius," to the craftsmanship (τέχνη) which can be taught and learned; but to our taste conscious workmanship, rather than untaught " inspiration," is the characteristic quality of Pindar himself. *We* should never dream of talking of *his* " native wood-notes wild," or of comparing him with a skylark pouring out its soul in " *unpremeditated* art." Also it was held commonly that the service the poet does us is definitely to " teach " us something—how to fight a battle, how to choose a wife, to retain a friend, or something of that kind. This explains why, in the *Apology*, when Socrates is speaking of his attempts to discover a " wiser man " than himself, he mentions poets along with statesmen as the two classes of recognized σοφοί to whom he first turned his attention (*Apol.* 22*c*). Since he found that the most admired poets were quite helpless at explaining the meaning of their own finest passages, he came to the conclusion, which he repeatedly maintains in Plato, that poets are not deliberate " craftsmen " at all, (do not compose in virtue of σοφία, *ibid.* 22*b*,) but that poetry is a matter of " natural endowment " (φύσις) and non-rational " inspiration," and thus became the originator of the conception of the " poet " conventional among ourselves.

Ion, who is represented as an eminent professional rhapsode, shares the current views of the " wisdom " of the poets; it is a matter of " skill " or " art " (τέχνη), and he assents at once to the inference that the professional reciter of poetry absorbs from his study of the poet's works a special measure of their author's " skill." The interpreter of the poet to the audience is, like the poet himself, the possessor of a " craft " or " profession." Yet he has to admit that his own skill as an interpreter is confined to the poetry of Homer; he cannot succeed in declaiming any other poet or explaining the " beauties " of his work; in fact, his interest flags as soon as any poet but Homer is made the topic of conversation. This, as Socrates says, serves to show that the rhapsode's accomplishment is not the result of specialist skill. All the poets, as Ion admits, treat of much the same topics—the conduct of men and women in the various occupations of life, the " things in the heavens and the underworld," and the births and doings of " gods," though Homer treats all these topics better than any one else. Hence if the exposition of a poet were a matter of professional expert knowledge, the same knowledge which makes a man able to appreciate and expound Homer, would equally make him a good critic and expositor of poetry in general. Consequently, Socrates suggests that the conception of the interpreter of the poet as a conscious " craftsman " is mistaken. The poets themselves are not self-conscious " artists "; they compose their works in a mood of " inspiration " in which they are " taken out of themselves," and are temporarily, like " seers " or Bacchanals, vehicles " possessed " by a higher power of which they are the unconscious mouthpieces. In the same way, the " rhapsode " with a special gift for reciting Homer is " inspired " by the poet at second-hand. He becomes

temporarily himself the " mouthpiece " of the poet, as the poet is the mouthpiece of the god. And he in turn " inspires " his hearers by communicating to them, in a non-logical way, something of the " inspiration " he has received from the poet. Thus poet, reciter, audience, are like so many links of iron, the first of which is " attracted " by a magnet, and in its turn attracts another. It is evidence for the non-rational character of this influence that the rhapsode for the time actually enters into the feelings of the characters whose speeches he is declaiming, shudders with their fears and weeps over their distresses, and makes his audience do the like, though neither they nor he may really be faced with any danger or distress. So far Ion is not unwilling to go with Socrates, but he is less ready to follow him when Socrates turns to the other chief feature in the popular conception of the poet, and denies that the poet as such is a " teacher " with knowledge to impart to us. If Homer were really a great teacher of wisdom human and divine, it should follow that a rhapsode, whose profession compels him to be intimately acquainted with Homer's poetry, is also a high authority in all fields of knowledge. But it is undeniable that a physician would be a sounder judge of Homer's statements about medicine than a rhapsode, and again that a racing man would be better able to appreciate and criticize the advice Nestor gives in the *Iliad* about horse-racing than a professional rhapsode, unless the rhapsode happens incidentally to be a specialist in horse-racing. If then there really is any department of specialist knowledge which can be acquired by a study of Homer, what is it ?

Ion falls back on the traditional view that at any rate Homer is a specialist in the art of warfare, and that a close student of Homer, such as he himself has been, learns from Homer the " art of the general." The *Iliad*, in fact, is a first-rate manual of military science, and Ion professes, on the strength of his familiarity with it, to be a great general *in posse*. But how comes it, then, that he has never attempted to distinguish himself in so eminently honourable a profession ? If there is no opening in his native city of Ephesus, which is now a subject-ally of Athens, why has he never, like some other aliens, entered the military service of Athens herself ?

Nominally the little dialogue is concerned with the question whether rhapsodes and actors owe their success to professional or expert knowledge, or to some kind of " genius " or non-rational " inspiration." But it is clear that the real points intended to be made are that the poet himself is not an " expert " in any kind of knowledge and, as poet, has not necessarily anything to teach us. These points are enforced more impressively in other Platonic works, notably in the *Phaedrus*, but the *Ion* has its value, both as a contribution to the psychology of the " rhapsode " (or, as we should say to-day, the actor), and as a particularly clear and simple refutation of the never-dying popular delusion that the function of the poet himself, and consequently of his exponent, is primarily didactic. The type of critic who conceives it to be his business to find

" morals " and " lessons " in the plays of Shakespeare, and regards it as the object of *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* to warn us against procrastination or ambition, has something to learn even from the *Ion*.

Menexenus.—The *Menexenus* offers, in a way, a worse puzzle to the reader than any other work of the Platonic *corpus*, and it is not surprising that its authenticity should be doubted by students of Plato who are in general on the conservative side in questions of genuineness. Externally the evidence for it is good. It is twice cited by Aristotle,[1] and once with a formal title, " the Funeral Discourse," and this seems to show that Aristotle at least believed it to be Platonic. Now the systematic production of works falsely ascribed to eminent authors seems not to occur in the history of Greek literature until long after the time of Aristotle. And again it is not likely that Aristotle, of all men, should have been misinformed about the real authorship of an Academic dialogue. Thus it is hard to believe either that the dialogue is a deliberate forgery or that it is a production of some lesser member of the Academy which has been ascribed by a simple mistake to Plato, as seems to be the case with a few of the minor items of the " canon of Thrasylus." Nor have modern stylometrical investigations given any reason to suspect the little work. Aristotle's allusion thus seems to compel us to accept it as genuine. On the other hand, there are two notorious difficulties which we have to face when we admit Plato's authorship. One is that it is at least hard to see what Plato's object in such a composition can be. The other is that the dialogue commits an anachronism to which there is no parallel anywhere in Plato, and which cannot be unconscious. The body of it is made up of a recital by Socrates of a " funeral oration " on the Athenians who fell in the Corinthian war, and Socrates professes to have heard the speech from the lips of the famous Aspasia, the wife of Pericles. It is certain that Socrates was put to death in the summer of the year 399 B.C., long before the opening of the Corinthian war (395 B.C.). Yet he is made to carry his review of Athenian history down to the pacification dictated by the Persian king, which ended the war in the year 387. Aspasia, the nominal speaker, must have died *before* Socrates. This is implied in the structure of the *Aspasia* of Aeschines, on which see H. Dittmar, *Aeschines von Sphettus*, 45–56. Plato must have violated chronology quite deliberately and with a view to producing a definite effect. But what can we suppose the intention to have been ?

It is idle to suggest that the whole affair is a mere Aristophanic jest, and that Plato only wants to show that he can rival the comedians on their own ground by putting ludicrous " topical allusions " into the mouth of his hero. We cannot reconcile such a use of Socrates, for purposes of pure burlesque, with the tone of reverence and devotion in which Plato continues to speak of Socrates in the letters written at the very end of his own life ; even

[1] *Rhetoric*, 1367*b* 8, 1415*b* 30.

if one could, we have to remember that Socrates is not being made, as he might be made in a burlesque, to offer a remarkably intelligent "anticipation of the course of events"; he is represented as commenting on the events of the twelve or thirteen years after his own death *ex post facto*. And we still have to explain why Socrates should pretend that Aspasia too is still a well-known figure at Athens, and that he has learned his discourse from her. Again, we cannot account for this use of Aspasia by appealing to the passage (*Menexenus*, 236*b*) where Socrates is made to credit her with the authorship of the famous "funeral speech," delivered by Pericles in the first year of the Archidamian war, and reported by Thucydides. Plato's object is not to ridicule oratory of this kind by the insinuation that its tone is what might be expected from a woman and an *hetaera*. The remains of the *Aspasia* of Aeschines of Sphettus, make it clear that the view, which underlies the proposals of *Republic* v., that "the goodness of a woman and that of a man are the same," was a genuine doctrine of Socrates, and that he quite seriously believed in the "political capacity" of Aspasia. His profession of owing his own "Funeral Discourse" to her is, no doubt, only half-serious, but it is quite in keeping with what we know to have been his real conviction. We have therefore to discover the object of the whole singular mystification, if we can, from an analysis of the oration itself.

It will not be necessary to insert here a full analysis, but there are certain points, well brought out in such a commentary as Stallbaum's, which we have to bear in mind. The discourse is framed on the lines we can see from comparison with the extant examples to have been conventional on such occasions. It treats first of the glorious inheritance and traditions of the community into which the future warriors were born and in which they were brought up, then of their own achievements, by which they have approved themselves worthy of such an origin, and finally of the considerations which should moderate the grief of their surviving friends and relatives. In this respect it exhibits a close parallel with the discourse of Pericles in Thucydides, the "funeral speech" included in the works ascribed to Lysias, the *Panegyricus* of Isocrates, the discourse of Hyperides on Leosthenes and his companions in the Lamian war. There are direct verbal echoes of the speech of Lysias, perhaps of that of Pericles, and, I suspect, also of the Isocratean *Panegyricus*, a work of the year 380. The diction again has clearly been modelled on that actually adopted in real encomia of the fallen, and it is this which makes it impossible to use evidence from style to date the dialogue. "Funeral orations" belong to the type of oratory called by the Greeks "epideictic," and demand an artificial elevation of diction and use of verbal ornament avoided in "forensic" pleading and political speaking. Hence all the extant specimens exhibit, to a greater or a less degree, the high-flown and semi-poetical character distinctive of the Sicilian "show declamation" introduced to Athens by Gorgias, and Plato

has been careful to preserve this peculiarity. When we examine the contents of the discourse, we see that he has been equally careful to conform to the accepted model. His oration, like those of Lysias and Isocrates, but unlike the really statesmanlike discourse of Pericles, dwells on the topics afforded by mythology for the glorification of Athens, the origination of the cultivation of corn and of the olive in Attica, the contest of Athena with Hephaestus for the patronage of the city, the public spirit and chivalry displayed in such legendary exploits as the protection of the family of Heracles and the rescuing for burial of the corpses of the champions who fell before the gates of Thebes. Lysias and Isocrates both expatiate on these prehistorical events at great length—a length apparently satirized by Socrates in the remark (239*b*) that they have already received their due meed of celebration from the poets. The speech then proceeds, like those which are apparently its immediate models, to a sketch of the history of Athens down to date, the object of which is to glorify the city on two grounds—its rooted and inveterate antipathy to "barbarians," (242*c–e*, 245*d*,) and its unselfish Panhellenism, shown by its readiness always to make sacrifices to preserve the "balance of power" between the different Greek cities by supporting the weaker side in these internal quarrels (244*e*). The demonstration of the second point in particular leads to a bold falsification of history, by which the fifth century attempts of Athens to dominate Boeotia and the Archidamian war itself are made to appear as heroic struggles against the "imperialism" of other communities. We know enough from Plato of the real sentiments both of himself and of Socrates to understand that this version of history cannot represent the serious convictions of either; it has all the appearance of satire on the "patriotic" version of history given by Isocrates in an inconsistent combination with Panhellenism. Similarly, after reading the *Gorgias* and *Republic* and the sketch of Athenian history given in *Laws* iii., we shall find it impossible to take the *Menexenus* seriously when it glorifies the existing constitution of Athens as a true aristocracy in which the men who are reputed to be "best" govern with the free consent of the multitude (238*d–e*). When we are told that at Athens, as nowhere else, "he who has the repute of wisdom and goodness is sovereign," the emphasis must be meant to fall on the words "who has the repute," and the encomium is disguised satire. Probably, then, the real purpose of the discourse is to imitate and at the same time, by adroit touches of concealed malice, to satirize popular "patriotic oratory." It is no objection to such an interpretation to say, what is true enough, that the speech contains noble passages on the duty of devotion to one's State and the obligation of perpetuating its finest traditions. Even the "flag-flapper" who distorts all history into a romantic legend of national self-glorification, usually has some good arguments, as well as many bad ones, for his "patriotism," and we may credit Plato with sufficient penetration to have seen that satire misses its designed effect unless